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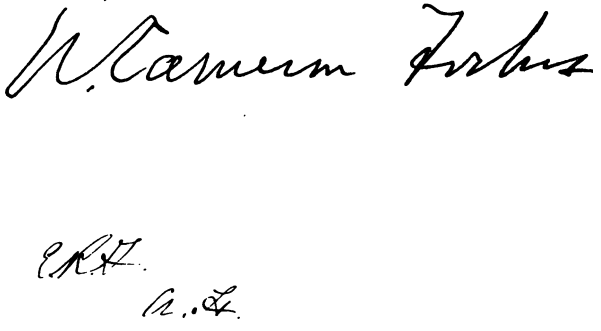

THE

LIFE AND WORKS

OF

WILLIAM COWPER.

VOL. V.

Weston House

THE WORKS

OF

WILLIAM COWPER

HIS

LIFE AND LETTERS

BY WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.

NOW FIRST COMPLETED BY THE INTRODUCTION OF

COWPER'S PRIVATE CORRESPONDENCE.

EDITED BY

THE REV. T. S. GRIMSHAWE, A.M.

RECTOR OF BURTON, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE, AND VICAR OF
SIDDENHAM, BEDFORDSHIRE, AUTHOR OF THE LIFE OF THE REV. LEON RICHMOND.

Letters, such as are written from wise men, are, of all the words of men, in my judgment the best LORD BACON.

VOL. V.

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THE

LIFE OF COWPER.

Part the Third—Continued.

In detailing the incidents that occur in the life of Cowper, we recorded, in the close of the last volume, a malevolent report highly injurious to his integrity and honour. In order to recall the fact to the memory of the reader, we insert the statement itself, in the words of Cowper: "A report is, and has been some time current, in this and the neighbouring counties, that, though I have given myself the air of declaiming against the slave trade, in 'The Task,' I am in reality a friend to it; and last night I received a letter from Joe Rye, to inform me, that I have been much traduced and calumniated on this account."

That the author of "The Task," a poem distinguished by its tone of pure and elevated morality, and breathing a spirit of most uncompromising hostility against the slave trade—that such a man, at that time in the very zenith of his fame, should be

publicly accused of favouring the very cause which he had so eloquently denounced, is one of those circumstances which, for the honour of human nature, we could wish not to have been compelled to record.

With this painful fact before us, we would ask, what is popularity, and what wise man would attach value to so fleeting a possession? It is a gleam of sunshine, which embellishes for a moment the object on which it falls, and then vanishes away. In the course of a life not passed without observation, we have had occasion to remark, in the political, the literary, and even in the religious world, the evanescent character of popular favour. We have seen men alternately caressed and deserted, praised and censured, and made to feel the vanity of human applause and admiration. The idol of to-day is dethroned by the idol of to-morrow, which in its turn yields to the dominion of some more favoured rival.

The wisdom of God evidently designs, by these events, to check the thirst for human praise and distinction, by showing us the precarious tenure by which they are held. We are thus admonished to examine our motives, and to be assured of the integrity of our intentions; neither to despise public favour, nor yet to overvalue it; but to preserve that calm and equable temper of mind, and that full consciousness of the rectitude of our principles, that we may learn to enjoy it without triumph, or to lose it without dejection.

" Henceforth
Thy patron He whose diadem has dropp'd
Yon gems of heaven; eternity thy prize;
And leave the racers of this world their own."

The reader will be amused in finding the origin of the injurious report above mentioned disclosed in the following letter. Mr. Rye was unjustly supposed to have aided in propagating this misconception, but Cowper fully vindicates him from such a charge.

TO THE REV. J. JEKYLL RYE.*

Weston, April 16, 1792.

My dear Sir—I am truly sorry that you should have suffered any apprehensions, such as your letter indicates, to molest you for a moment. I believe you to be as honest a man as lives, and consequently do not believe it possible that you could in your letter to Mr. Pitts, or any otherwise, wilfully misrepresent me. In fact you did not; my opinions on the subject in question were, when I had the pleasure of seeing you, such as in that letter you stated them to be, and such they still continue.

If any man concludes, because I allow myself the use of sugar and rum, that therefore I am a friend to the *slave trade*, he concludes rashly, and does me great wrong; for the man lives not who abhors it more than I do. My reasons for my own practice are satisfactory to myself, and they whose practice is contrary, are, I suppose, satisfied with

* Vicar of Dalington, near Northampton.

theirs. So far is good. Let every man act according to his own judgment and conscience; but if we condemn another for not seeing with our eyes, we are unreasonable; and if we reproach him on that account, we are uncharitable, which is a still greater evil.

I had heard, before I received the favour of yours, that such a report of me, as you mention, had spread about the country. But my information told me that it was founded thus—The people of Olney petitioned parliament for the abolition—My name was sought among the subscribers, but was not found. A question was asked, how that happened? Answer was made, that I had once indeed been an enemy to the slave trade, but had changed my mind, for that, having lately read a history, or an account of Africa, I had seen it there asserted, that till the commencement of that traffic, the negroes, multiplying at a prodigious rate, were necessitated to devour each other; for which reason I had judged it better that the trade should continue, than that they should be again reduced to so horrid a custom.

Now all this is a fable. I have read no such history; I never in my life read any such assertion; nor, had such an assertion presented itself to me, should I have drawn any such conclusion from it. On the contrary, bad as it were, I think it would be better the negroes should even eat one another, than that we should carry them to market. The single reason why I did not sign the petition was, because I was never asked to do it; and the

reason why I was never asked was, because I am not a parishioner of Olney.

Thus stands the matter. You will do me the justice, I dare say, to speak of me as of a man who abhors the commerce, which is now, I hope, in a fair way to be abolished, as often as you shall find occasion. And I beg you henceforth to do yourself the justice to believe it impossible that I should, for a moment, suspect you of duplicity or misrepresentation. I have been grossly slandered, but neither by you, nor in consequence of any thing that you have either said or written. I remain, therefore, still, as heretofore, with great respect, *much and truly* yours,

W. C.

Mrs. Unwin's compliments attend you.

Cowper, on this occasion, addressed the following letter to the Editors of the *Northampton Mercury*, enclosing the verses on Mr. Wilberforce, which were inserted at the close of the last volume.

TO THE PRINTERS OF THE NORTHAMPTON MERCURY.

Weston Underwood, April 16, 1792.

Sirs—Having lately learned that it is pretty generally reported, both in your county and in this, that my present opinion, concerning the slave trade, differs totally from that which I have heretofore given to the public, and that I am no longer an enemy but a friend to that horrid traffic; I entreat you to take an early opportunity to insert in your

Paper the following lines,* written no longer since than this very morning, expressly for the two purposes of doing just honour to the gentleman with whose name they are inscribed, and of vindicating myself from an aspersion so injurious.

I am, &c.,

W. COWPER.

The last two lines in the sonnet, addressed to Mr. Wilberforce, were originally thus expressed:

> Then let them scoff—two prizes thou hast won;
> Freedom for captives, and thy God's—Well done.

These were subsequently altered as follows:

> Enjoy what thou hast won, esteem and love
> From all the just on earth and all the blest above.

Cowper's version of Homer, which has formed so frequent a subject in the preceding volume, led to a public discussion, in which the interests of literature and the success of his own undertaking were deeply concerned. The question agitated was the relative merits of rhyme and blank verse, in undertaking a translation of that great poet. Johnson, the great dictator in the republic of letters, in his predilection for rhyme, had almost proscribed the use of blank verse in poetical composition. "Poetry," he observes, in his life of Milton, "may subsist without rhyme; but English poetry will not please,

* See Vol. iv. p. 353.

nor can rhyme ever be safely spared, but where the subject is able to support itself. Blank verse makes some approach to that which is called the *lapidary style;* has neither the easiness of prose, nor the melody of numbers; and therefore tires by long continuance. Of the Italian writers without rhyme, whom Milton alleges as precedents, not one is popular. What reason could urge in its defence, has been confuted by the ear."

Johnson however makes an exception, in the instance of Milton.

"But, whatever be the advantages of rhyme," he adds, "I cannot prevail on myself to wish that Milton had been a rhymer; for I cannot wish his work to be other than it is; yet, like other heroes, he is to be admired rather than imitated. He that thinks himself capable of astonishing, may write blank verse; but those that hope only to please must condescend to rhyme."

In his critique on the "Night Thoughts," he makes a similar concession. "This is one of the few poems in which blank verse could not be changed for rhyme but with disadvantage. The wild diffusion of the sentiments, and the digressive sallies of imagination, would have been compressed and restrained by confinement to rhyme."*

Cowper, it will be remembered, questions the

* Young's testimony in favour of blank verse is thus forcibly, though rather pompously, expressed:—

"Blank verse is verse unfallen, uncursed; verse reclaimed, re-enthroned in the true language of the Gods."

See *Conjectures on Original Composition.*

correctness of Johnson's taste on this subject, and vindicates the force and majesty of blank verse with much weight of argument. With respect, however, to the important question, how a translation of Homer might be best executed, his sentiments are delivered so much at large in the admirable preface to his version of the Iliad, that we shall lay a few extracts from it before the reader.

"Whether a translation of Homer," he remarks, "may be best executed in blank verse or in rhyme, is a question in the decision of which no man can find difficulty, who has ever duly considered what translation ought to be, or who is in any degree practically acquainted with those very different kinds of versification. I will venture to assert, that a just translation of any ancient poet in rhyme is impossible. No human ingenuity can be equal to the task of closing every couplet with sounds homotonous, expressing at the same time the full sense, and only the full sense, of his original. The translator's ingenuity, indeed, in this case becomes itself a snare; and the readier he is at invention and expedient, the more likely he is to be betrayed into the widest departures from the guide whom he professes to follow."

It was this acknowledged defect in Pope, that led Cowper to engage in his laborious undertaking of producing a new version.

We admire the candour with which he appreciates the merits of Pope's translation, and yet we cannot refuse to admit the justness of his strictures.

"I have no contest," he observes, "with my predecessor. None is supposable between performers on different instruments. Mr. Pope has surmounted all difficulties in his version of Homer that it was possible to surmount in rhyme. But he was fettered, and his fetters were his choice." "He has given us the *Tale of Troy divine* in smooth verse, generally in correct and elegant language, and in diction often highly poetical. But his deviations are so many, occasioned chiefly by the cause already mentioned, that, much as he has done, and valuable as his work is on some accounts, it was yet in the humble province of a translator, that I thought it possible even for me to follow him with some advantage."

What the reader may expect to discover in the two respective versions is thus described. "The matter found in me, whether he like it or not, is found also in Homer; and the matter not found in me, how much soever he may admire it, is found only in Mr. Pope. I have omitted nothing; I have invented nothing." "Fidelity is indeed of the very essence of translation, and the term itself implies it. For which reason, if we suppress the sense of our original, and force into its place our own, we may call our work an *imitation*, if we please, or perhaps a *paraphrase*, but it is no longer the same author only in a different dress, and therefore it is not translation."

After dwelling upon the merits and defects of the free and the close translation, and observing that the former can hardly be true to the original

author's style and manner, and that the latter is apt to be servile, he thus declares his view of the subject. "On the whole, the translation which partakes equally of fidelity and liberality, that is close, but not so close as to be servile; free, but not so free as to be licentious, promises fairest; and my ambition will be sufficiently gratified, if such of my readers as are able and will take the pains to compare me in this respect with Homer, shall judge that I have in any measure attained a point so difficult."

He concludes his excellent preface with these interesting words:

"And now I have only to regret, that my pleasant work is ended. To the illustrious Greek I owe the smooth and easy flight of many thousand hours. He has been my companion at home and abroad, in the study, in the garden, and in the field; and no measure of success, let my labours succeed as they may, will ever compensate to me the loss of the innocent luxury that I have enjoyed as a translator of Homer."

Having thus endeavoured to do justice to the excellent preface of Cowper, we have reserved an interesting correspondence, which passed between Lord Thurlow and Cowper on this subject, and now introduce it to the notice of the reader. It is without date.

TO THE LORD THURLOW.

My Lord—A letter reached me yesterday from

Henry Cowper, enclosing another from your lordship to himself; of which a passage in my work formed the subject. It gave me the greatest pleasure: your strictures are perfectly just, and here follows the speech of Achilles accommodated to them. * * * *

* * * * * *

I did not expect to find your lordship on the side of rhyme, remembering well with how much energy and interest I have heard you repeat passages from the "Paradise Lost," which you could not have recited as you did, unless you had been perfectly sensible of their music. It comforts me therefore to know that if you have an ear for rhyme, you have an ear for blank verse also.

It seems to me that I may justly complain of rhyme as an inconvenience in translation, even though I assert in the sequel that to me it has been easier to rhyme than to write without, because I always suppose a rhyming translator to ramble, and always obliged to do so. Yet I allow your lordship's version of this speech of Achilles to be very close, and closer much than mine. But I believe that, should either your lordship or I give them burnish or elevation, your lines would be found, in measure as they acquired stateliness, to have lost the merit of fidelity—in which case nothing more would be done than Pope has done already.

I cannot ask your lordship to proceed in your strictures, though I should be happy to receive more of them. Perhaps it is possible that when

you retire into the country, you may now and then amuse yourself with my translation. Should your remarks reach me, I promise faithfully that they shall be all most welcome, not only as yours, but because I am sure my work will be the better for them.

With sincere and fervent wishes for your lordship's health and happiness, I remain, my lord, &c.

W. C.

The following is Lord Thurlow's reply.

TO WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ.

Dear Cowper—On coming to town this morning, I was surprised particularly at receiving from you an answer to a scrawl I sent Harry, which I have forgot too much to resume now. But I think I could not mean to patronize rhyme. I have fancied that it was introduced to mark the measure in modern languages, because they are less numerous and metrical than the ancient, and the name seems to import as much. Perhaps there was melody in ancient song without straining it to musical notes, as the common Greek pronunciation is said to have had the compass of five parts of an octave. But surely that word is only figuratively applied to modern poetry. Euphony seems to be the highest term it will bear. I have fancied also, that euphony is an impression derived a good deal from habit, rather than suggested by nature; therefore in some degree accidental, and consequently conventional. Else,

why can't we bear a drama with rhyme, or the French, one without it? Suppose the "Rape of the Lock," "Windsor Forest," "L'Allegro," "Il Penseroso," and many other little poems which please, stripped of the rhyme, which might easily be done, would they please as well? It would be unfair to treat rondeaus, ballads, and odes in the same manner, because rhyme makes in some sort a part of the conceit. It was this way of thinking which made me suppose that habitual prejudice would miss the rhyme; and that neither Dryden nor Pope would have dared to give their great authors in blank verse.

I wondered to hear you say you thought rhyme easier in original compositions; but you explained it, that you could go farther a-field if you were pushed for want of a rhyme. An expression preferred for the sake of the rhyme looks as if it were worth more than you allow. But, to be sure, in translation, the necessity of rhyme imposes very heavy fetters upon those who mean translation, not paraphrase. Our common heroic metre is enough; the pure iambic bearing only a sparing introduction of spondees, trochees, &c., to vary the measure.

Mere translation I take to be impossible, if no metre were required. But the difference of the iambic and heroic measure destroys that at once. It is also impossible to obtain the same sense from a dead language and an ancient author, which those of his own time and country conceived; words and phrases contract, from time and use, such strong

shades of difference from their original import. In a living language, with the familiarity of a whole life, it is not easy to conceive truly the actual sense of current expressions, much less of older authors. No two languages furnish *equipollent* words,—their phrases differ, their syntax and their idioms still more widely. But a translation, strictly so called, requires an exact conformity in all those particulars, and also in numbers; therefore it is impossible. I really think at present, notwithstanding the opinion expressed in your preface, that a translator asks himself a good question, How would my author have expressed the sentence I am turning, in English, as literally and fully as the genius, and use, and character of the language will admit of?

In the passage before us, ατται was the fondling expression of childhood to its parent; and to those who first translated the lines, conveyed feelingly that amiable sentiment. Γεραιε expressed the reverence which naturally accrues to age. Διοτρεφης implies an history. Hospitality was an article of religion; strangers were supposed to be sent by God, and honoured accordingly. Jove's altar was placed in ξενοδοχειον. Phœnix had been describing that as his situation in the court of Peleus; and his Διοτρεφες refers to it. But you must not translate that literally –

Old daddy Phœnix, a God-send for us to maintain.

"Precious limbs," was at first an expression of great feeling, till vagabonds, draymen, &c., brought upon it the character of coarseness and ridicule.

It would run to great length, if I were to go through this one speech thus—this is enough for an example of my idea, and to prove the necessity of farther deviation; which still is departing from the author, and justifiable only by strong necessity, such as should not be admitted, till the sense of the original had been laboured to the utmost and been found irreducible.

I will end this by giving you the strictest translation I can invent, leaving you the double task of bringing it closer, and of polishing it into the style of poetry.

Ah Phœnix, aged father, guest of Jove!
I relish no such honours; for my hope
Is to be honour'd by Jove's fated will,
Which keeps me close beside these sable ships,
Long as the breath shall in my bosom stay,
Or as my precious knees retain their spring.
Further, I say—and cast it in your mind!—
Melt not my spirit down by weeping thus,
And wailing, only for that great man's sake,
Atrides: neither ought you love that man,
Lest I should hate the friend I love so well.
With me united, 'tis your nobler part
To gall his spirit who has galled mine.
With reign equal, half my honours share.
These will report; stay you here, and repose
On a soft bed; and with the beaming morn
Consult we, whether to go home, or stay.

Iliad, Book ix.

I have thought that *hero* has contracted a different sense than it had in Homer's time, and is better rendered *great man:* but I am aware that the enclitics and other little words, falsely called exple-

tives, are not introduced even so much as the genius of our language would admit. The euphony I leave entirely to you. Adieu!

TO THE LORD THURLOW

My Lord—We are of one mind as to the agreeable effect of rhyme, or euphony, in the lighter kinds of poetry. The pieces which your lordship mentions would certainly be spoiled by the loss of it, and so would all such. The "Alma" would lose all its neatness and smartness, and "Hudibras" all its humour. But in grave poems of extreme length, I apprehend that the case is different. Long before I thought of commencing poet myself, I have complained, and heard others complain, of the wearisomeness of such poems. Not that I suppose that tedium the effect of rhyme itself, but rather of the perpetual recurrence of the same pause and cadence, unavoidable in the English couplet. I hope, I may say truly, it was not in a spirit of presumption that I undertook to do what, in your lordship's opinion, neither Dryden nor Pope would have dared to do. On the contrary, I see not how I could have escaped that imputation, had I followed Pope in his own way. A closer translation was called for. I verily believed that rhyme had betrayed Pope into *his* deviations. For me, therefore, to have used his mode of versifying, would have been to expose myself to the same miscarriage, at the same time that I had not his talents to atone for it.

I agree with your lordship that a translation perfectly close is impossible, because time has sunk the original strict import of a thousand phrases, and we have no means of recovering it. But if we cannot be unimpeachably faithful, that is no reason why we should not be as faithful as we can; and if blank verse affords the fairest chance, then it claims the preference.

Your lordship, I will venture to say, can command me nothing in which I will not obey with the greatest alacrity.

Ει δυναμαι τελεσαι γε, και ει τετελεσμενον εστι.

But when, having made as close a translation as even you can invent, you enjoin me to make it still closer, and in rhyme too, I can only reply, as Horace to Augustus,

"——— cupidum, pater optime, vires
Deficiunt ——"

I have not treacherously departed from my pattern that I might seem to give some proof of the justness of my own opinion, but have fairly and honestly adhered as closely to it as I could. Yet your lordship will not have to compliment me on my success, either in respect of the poetical merit of my lines, or of their fidelity. They have just enough of each to make them deficient in the other.

Oh Phœnix, father, friend, guest sent from Jove!
Me no such honours as they yield can move,
For I expect my honours from above.
Here Jove has fix'd me; and while breath and sense
Have place within me, I will never hence.
Hear, too, and mark me well—haunt not mine ears
With sighs, nor seek to melt me with thy tears
For yonder chief, lest, urging such a plea
Through love of him, thou hateful prove to me.
Thy friendship for thy friend shall brighter shine,
Wounding his spirit, who has wounded mine.
Divide with me the honours of my throne—
These shall return, and make their tidings known,
But go not thou—thy couch shall here be dress'd
With softest fleeces for thy easy rest,
And with the earliest blush of op'ning day
We will consult to seek our home, or stay.

Since I wrote these I have looked at Pope's. I am certainly somewhat closer to the original than he, but farther I say not. I shall wait with impatience for your lordship's conclusions from these premises, and remain, in the mean time, with great truth, my lord, &c.

W. C.

TO WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ.

Dear Cowper—I have received your letter on my journey through London, and as the chaise waits I shall be short. I did not mean it as a sign of any presumption that you have attempted what neither Dryden nor Pope would have dared; but

merely as a proof of their addiction to rhyme; for I am clearly convinced that Homer may be better translated than into rhyme, and that you have succeeded in the places I have looked into. But I have fancied that it might have been still more literal, preserving the ease of genuine English and melody, and some degree of that elevation which Homer derives from simplicity. But I could not do it, or even near enough to form a judgment, or more than a fancy about it. Nor do I fancy it could be done "stans pede in uno." But when the mind has been fully impregnated with the original passage, often revolving it, and waiting for a happy moment, may still be necessary to the best trained mind. Adieu.

THURLOW.

TO THE LORD THURLOW.

My Lord—I haunt you with letters, but will trouble you now with a short line, only to tell your lordship how happy I am that any part of my work has pleased you. I have a comfortable consciousness that the whole has been executed with equal industry and attention; and am, my lord, with many thanks to you for snatching such a hasty moment to write to me, your lordship's obliged and affectionate humble servant,

W. COWPER.

These letters cannot fail to be read with great interest.

Having in a former part of this work contrasted the two versions of Cowper and Pope, we shall now close the subject, by quoting Cowper's translation of some well-known and admired passages in the original poem. The classical reader will thus be enabled to determine how far the poet has succeeded in the application of his own principle, and retained the bold and lofty spirit of Homer, while he aims at transfusing his noble simplicity, and adhering strictly to his genuine meaning We have selected the following specimens.

Hector extending his arms to caress his son Astyanax, in his interview with Andromache:

The hero ended, and his hands put forth
To reach his boy; but with a scream the child
Still closer to his nurse's bosom clung,
Shunning his touch; for dreadful in his eyes
The brazen armour shone, and dreadful more
The shaggy crest, that swept his father's brow.
Both parents smil'd, delighted; and the chief
Set down the crested terror on the ground,
Then kiss'd him, play'd away his infant fears,
And thus to Jove, and all the Pow'rs above:
Grant, O ye gods! such eminent renown
And might in arms, as ye have giv'n to me,
To this my son, with strength to govern Troy.
From fight return'd, be this his welcome home—
"He far excels his sire"—and may he rear
The crimson trophy, to his mother's joy!*

* For two other versions of this passage, see Letters, dated Dec. 17, 1793, and Jan. 5, 1794.

He spake, and to his lovely spouse consign'd
The darling boy; with mingled smiles and tears
She wrapp'd him in her bosom's fragrant folds,
And Hector, pang'd with pity that she wept,
Her dewy cheek strok'd softly, and began.
Weep not for me, my love! no mortal arm
Shall send me prematurely to the shades,
Since, whether brave or dastard, at his birth
The fates ordain to each his hour to die.
Hence, then, to our abode; there weave or spin,
And task thy maidens. War to men belongs;
To all of Troy; and most of all to me.

Book vi. line 524.

The fatal conflict between Hector and Achilles:

So saying, his keen falchion from his side
He drew, well temper'd, ponderous, and rush'd
At once to combat. As the eagle darts
Right downward through a sullen cloud to seize
Weak lamb or tim'rous hare, so he to fight
Impetuous sprang, and shook his glitt'ring blade.
Achilles opposite, with fellest ire
Full-fraught came on; his shield with various art
Divine portray'd, o'erspread his ample chest;
And on his radiant casque terrific wav'd,
By Vulcan spun, his crest of bushy gold,
Bright as, among the stars, the star of all
Most splendid, Hesperus, at midnight moves;
So in the right hand of Achilles beam'd
His brandish'd spear, while, meditating woe
To Hector, he explor'd his noble form,
Seeking where he was vulnerable most.
But ev'ry part, his dazzling armour, torn
From brave Patroclus' body, well secur'd,
Save where the circling key-bone from the neck
Disjoins the shoulder; there his throat appear'd,
Whence injur'd life with swiftest flight escapes.

Achilles, plunging in that part his spear,
Impell'd it through the yielding flesh beyond.
The ashen beam his pow'r of utt'rance left
Still unimpair'd, but in the dust he fell.

Hector's prayer to Achilles:

By thy own life, by theirs who gave thee birth,
And by thy knees, oh let not Grecian dogs
Rend and devour me, but in gold accept
And brass a ransom at my father's hands,
And at my mother's, an illustrious price;
Send home my body, grant me burial rites
Among the daughters and the sons of Troy.
Book xxii. line 354.

The indignant answer of Achilles to the prayer of Hector:

Dog! neither knees nor parents name to me.
I would my fierceness of revenge were such,
That I could carve and eat thee, to whose arms
Such griefs I owe; so true it is and sure,
That none shall save thy carcase from the dogs.
No. Would they bring ten ransoms by the scale,
Or twice ten ransoms, and still promise more;
Would Priam buy thee with thy weight in gold,
Not even then should she who bare thee weep
Upon thy bier; for dogs and rav'ning fowls
Shall rend thy flesh, till ev'ry bone be bare.

Hector's last dying words:

I knew thee; knew that I should sue in vain,
For in thy breast of steel no pity dwells.
But oh, be cautious now, lest Heav'n percnance
Requite thee on that day, when, pierc'd thyself
By Paris and Apollo, thou shalt fall,
Brave as thou art, within the Scæan gate.
He ceas'd, and death involv'd him dark around.
His spirit, from his limbs dismiss'd, the house

Of Hades sought, deploring as she went
Youth's prime and vigour lost, disastrous doom!
But him, though dead, Achilles thus bespake:
Die thou. My death shall find me at what hour
Jove gives commandment, and the gods above.
Ibid. line 396.

The interview between Achilles and Priam, who comes to ransom the body of Hector:

. . . . . One I had,
One, more than all my sons the strength of Troy,
Whom standing for his country thou hast slain—
Hector—His body to redeem I come,
In Achaia's fleet, and bring, myself,
Ransom inestimable to thy tent.
O, fear the gods! and for remembrance' sake
Of thy own sire, Achilles! pity me,
More hapless still; who bear what, save myself,
None ever bore, thus lifting to my lips
Hands dyed so deep with slaughter of my sons.
So saying, he waken'd in his soul regret
Of his own sire; softly he plac'd his hand
On Priam's hand, and push'd him gently away.
Remembrance melted both. Stretch'd prone before
Achilles' feet, the king his son bewail'd,
Wide-slaughtering Hector; and Achilles wept
By turns his father, and by turns his friend,
Patroclus; sounds of sorrow fill'd the tent.
Book xxiv. line 622.

Without entering upon any minute analysis of the above passages, we consider them as exhibiting a happy specimen of poetic talent; and that Cowper has been successful in exemplifying the rules and principles which, in his preface, he declares to be indispensable in a version of Homer.

It may be interesting to literary curiosity to be presented with a summary of facts respecting Cowper's two versions of Homer.

This important undertaking commenced Nov. 21st, 1784, and was completed August 25th, 1790. During eight months of this intervening time, he was hindered by indisposition, so that he was occupied in the work, on the whole, five years and one month. On the 8th of September, 1790, his kinsman, the Rev. John Johnson, conveyed the translation to Johnson, the bookseller in St. Paul's Churchyard, with a view to its consignment to the press. During this period Cowper gave the work a second revisal, which he concluded March 4th, 1791. On July 1st of the same year the publication issued from the press. In 1793 there was a further revision, with the addition of explanatory notes, a second edition having been called for. In 1796 he engaged in a revisal of the whole work, which, owing to his state of mind and declining health, was not finished till March 8th, 1799. In January, 1800, he new-modelled a passage in his translation of the Iliad, where mention is made of the very ancient sculpture, in which Dædalus had represented the Cretan dance for Ariadne. This proved to be the last effort of his pen.*

We have thought it due to Cowper's version to enter thus largely into an examination of its merits, from a persuasion that an undertaking of this magnitude, executed by the author of "The Task,"

* See Dr. Johnson's sketch of the Life of Cowper.

claims to be considered as a part of our national literature. It remains only to be observed that the foreigner whom he mentions with so much estimation, as having aided him with his critical taste and erudition, was Fuseli the painter. He gratefully acknowledges his obligations in the following letters to Johnson the bookseller.

Weston, Feb. 11, 1790.

Dear Sir—I am very sensibly obliged by the remarks of Mr. Fuseli, and beg that you will tell him so; they afford me opportunities of improvement which I shall not neglect. When he shall see the press-copy, he will be convinced of this, and will be convinced likewise, that, smart as he sometimes is, he spares me often, when I have no mercy on myself. He will see almost a new translation. * * * I assure you faithfully, that whatever my faults may be, to be easily or hastily satisfied with what I have written is not one of them.

Sept. 7, 1790.

It grieves me that, after all, I am obliged to go into public without the whole advantage of Mr. Fuseli's judicious strictures. The only consolation is, that I have not forfeited them by my own impatience. Five years are no small portion of a

man's life, especially at the latter end of it, and in those five years, being a man of almost no engagements, I have done more in the way of hard work, than most could have done in twice the number. I beg you to present my compliments to Mr. Fuseli, with many and sincere thanks for the services that his own more important occupations would allow him to render me.

We add one more letter in this place, addressed to his bookseller, to show with what becoming resolution he could defend his poetical opinions when he considered them to be just.

Some accidental reviser of the manuscript had taken the liberty to alter a line in a poem of Cowper's:—this liberty drew from the offended poet the following very just and animated remonstrance, which we are anxious to preserve, because it elucidates with great felicity of expression his deliberate ideas on English versification.

"I did not write the line that has been tampered with, hastily, or without due attention to the construction of it; and what appeared to me its only merit is, in its present state, entirely annihilated.

"I know that the ears of modern verse-writers are delicate to an excess, and their readers are troubled with the same squeamishness as themselves. So that if a line do not run as smooth as quicksilver,

they are offended. A critic of the present day serves a poem as a cook serves a dead turkey, when she fastens the legs of it to a post, and draws out all the sinews. For this we may thank Pope; but unless we could imitate him in the closeness and compactness of his expression, as well as in the smoothness of his numbers, we had better drop the imitation, which serves no other purpose than to emasculate and weaken all we write. Give me a manly rough line, with a deal of meaning in it, rather than a whole poem full of musical periods, that have nothing but their oily smoothness to recommend them!

"I have said thus much, as I hinted in the beginning, because I have just finished a much longer poem than the last, which our common friend will receive by the same messenger that has the charge of this letter. In that poem there are many lines which an ear so nice as the gentleman's who made the above-mentioned alteration would undoubtedly condemn, and yet (if I may be permitted to say it) they cannot be made smoother without being the worse for it. There is a roughness on a plum, which nobody that understands fruit would rub off, though the plum would be much more polished without it. But, lest I tire you, I will only add, that I wish you to guard me from all such meddling, assuring you, that I always write as smoothly as I can, but that I never did, never will, sacrifice the spirit or sense of a passage to the sound of it."

Cowper was much affected at this time by a

severe indisposition, to which he alludes in the following letter

TO THOMAS PARK, ESQ.

Weston Underwood, April 27, 1792.

Dear Sir—I write now merely to prevent any suspicion in your mind that I neglect you. I have been very ill, and for more than a fortnight unable to use the pen, or you should have heard long ere now of the safe arrival of your packet. I have revised the Elegy on Seduction,* but have not as yet been able to proceed farther. The best way of returning these which I have now in hand, will be to return them with those which you propose to send hereafter. I will make no more apologies for any liberties that it may seem necessary to me to take with your copies. Why do you send them, but that I may exercise that freedom, of which the very act of sending them implies your permission? I will only say, therefore, that you must neither be impatient nor even allow yourself to think me tardy, since assuredly I will not be more so than I needs must be. My hands are pretty full. Milton must be forwarded, and is at present hardly begun; and I have beside a numerous correspondence, which engrosses more of my time than I can at present well afford to it. I cannot decide with myself whether the lines in which the reviewers are so smartly

* This Elegy is inserted in Mr. Park's volume of sonnets and miscellaneous poems.

noticed had better be expunged or not. Those lines are gracefully introduced and well written; for which reasons I should be loth to part with them. On the other hand, how far it may be prudent to irritate a body of critics, who certainly much influence the public opinion, may deserve consideration. It may be added too, that they are not all equally worthy of the lash: there are among them men of real learning, judgment, and candour. I must leave it, therefore, to your own determination.

I thank you for Thomson's Epitaph, on which I have only to remark (and I am sure that I do it not in a captious spirit) that, since the poet is himself the speaker, I cannot but question a little the propriety of the quotation subjoined. It is a prayer, and when the man is buried, the time of prayer is over. I know it may be answered, that it is placed there merely for the benefit of the reader; but all readers of tombstones are not wise enough to be trusted for such an interpretation.

I was well pleased with your poem on * * * and equally well pleased with your intention not to publish it. It proves two points of consequence to an author:—both that you have an exuberant fancy, and discretion enough to know how to deal with it. The man is as formidable for his ludicrous talent, as he has made himself contemptible by his use of it. To despise him therefore is natural, but it is wise to do it in secret.

Since the juvenile poems of Milton were edited

by Warton, you need not trouble yourself to send them. I have them of his edition already.

I am, dear sir, affectionately yours,

W. C.

The marriage of Miss Stapleton, the Catharina of Cowper, to Sir John Throckmorton's brother, (now Mr. Courtenay,) was one of those events which the muse of Cowper had ventured to anticipate; and he had now the happiness of finding his cherished wish amply fulfilled, and of thereby securing them as neighbours at the Hall.*

TO LADY HESKETH.

Weston, May 20, 1792.

My dearest Coz.—I rejoice, as thou reasonably supposest me to do, in the matrimonial news communicated in your last. Not that it was altogether

* This wish is expressed in the following lines:—

"With her book, and her voice, and her lyre,
To wing all her moments at home,
And with scenes that new rapture inspire,
As oft as it suits her to roam;
She will have just the life she prefers,
With little to hope or to fear,
And ours would be pleasant as hers,
Might we view her enjoying it here."

See *Verses addressed to Miss Stapleton*, vol. iv, p. 230.

news to me, for twice I had received broad hints of it from Lady Frog, by letter, and several times *vivâ voce* while she was here. But she enjoined *me* secrecy as well as *you*, and you know that all secrets are safe with me; safer far than the winds in the bags of Æolus. I know not, in fact, the lady whom it would give me more pleasure to call Mrs. Courtenay, than the lady in question; partly because I know her, but especially because I know her to be all that I can wish in a neighbour.

I have often observed, that there is a regular alternation of good and evil in the lot of men, so that a favourable incident may be considered as the harbinger of an unfavourable one, and *vice versâ*. Dr. Madan's experience witnesses to the truth of this observation. One day he gets a broken head, and the next a mitre to heal it. I rejoice that he has met with so effectual a cure, though my joy is not unmingled with concern; for till now I had some hope of seeing him, but since I live in the north, and his episcopal call is in the west, that is a gratification, I suppose, which I must no longer look for.

My sonnet, which I sent you, was printed in the Northampton paper, last week, and this week it produced me a complimentary one in the same paper, which served to convince me, at least by the matter of it, that my own was not published without occasion, and that it had answered its purpose.*

* We have succeeded in obtaining these verses, and think them worthy of insertion:

My correspondence with Hayley proceeds briskly, and is very affectionate on both sides. I expect him here in about a fortnight, and wish heartily, with Mrs. Unwin, that you would give him a meeting. I have promised him, indeed, that he shall find us alone, but you are one of the family.

I wish much to print the following lines in one of the daily papers. Lord S.'s vindication of the poor culprit * in the affair of Cheit Sing, has confirmed me in the belief that he has been injuriously treated, and I think it an act merely of justice to take a little notice of him.

TO WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ.

ON READING HIS SONNET OF THE SIXTEENTH INSTANT ADDRESSED TO MR. WILBERFORCE.

Desert the cause of liberty!—the cause
Of human nature!—sacred flame that burn'd
So late, so bright within thee!—thence descend
The monster Slavery's unnat'ral friend!
'Twere vile aspersion! justly, while it draws
Thy virtuous indignation, greatly spurn'd.

As soon the foes of Afric might expect
The altar's blaze, forgetful of the law
Of its aspiring nature, should direct
To hell its point inverted; as to draw
Virtue like thine, and genius, grovelling base,
To sanction wrong, and dignify disgrace.

Welcome *detection!* grateful to the *Cause*,
As to its Patron, Cowper's just applause!

S. M'CLELLAN.

April 25, 1792.

* Warren Hastings, at that time under impeachment, as Governor General of India.

TO WARREN HASTINGS, ESQ.

BY AN OLD SCHOOL-FELLOW OF HIS AT WESTMINSTER.

Hastings! I knew thee young, and of a mind
While young, humane, conversable, and kind;
Nor can I well believe thee, gentle THEN,
Now grown a villain, and the WORST of men:
But rather some suspect, who have oppress'd
And worried thee, as not themselves the BEST.

If thou wilt take the pains to send them to thy news-monger, I hope thou wilt do well. Adieu!

W. C.

TO JOHN JOHNSON, ESQ.

Weston, May 20, 1792.

My dearest of all Johnnies—I am not sorry that your ordination is postponed. A year's learning and wisdom, added to your present stock, will not be more than enough to satisfy the demands of your function. Neither am I sorry that you find it difficult to fix your thoughts to the serious point at all times. It proves, at least, that you attempt, and wish to do it, and these are good symptoms. Woe to those who enter on the ministry of the gospel without having previously asked, at least from God, a mind and spirit suited to their occupation, and whose experience never differs from itself, because they are always alike vain, light, and inconsiderate. It is, therefore, matter of great joy to me to hear you complain of levity, and such it is to Mrs. Unwin. She is, I thank God, tolerably well, and loves you.

As to the time of your journey hither, the sooner after June the better; till then we shall have company.

I forget not my debts to your dear sister, and your Aunt Balls. Greet them both with a brother's kiss, and place it to my account. I will write to them when Milton, and a thousand other engagements will give me leave. Mr. Hayley is here on a visit. We have formed a friendship that I trust will last for life, and render us an edifying example to all future poets.

Adieu! Lose no time in coming after the time mentioned.

W. C.

The reader is informed, by the close of the last letter, that Hayley was at this time the guest of Cowper. The meeting, so singularly produced, was a source of reciprocal delight; and each looked cheerfully forward to the unclouded enjoyment of many social and literary hours.

Hayley's account of this visit is too interesting, not to be recorded in his own words.

"My host, though now in his sixty-first year, appeared as happily exempt from all the infirmities of advanced life, as friendship could wish him to be; and his more elderly companion, not materially oppressed by age, discovered a benevolent alertness of character that seemed to promise a continuance of their domestic comfort. Their reception of me was kindness itself:—I was enchanted to find that the manners and conversation of Cowper resembled his

poetry, charming by unaffected elegance, and the graces of a benevolent spirit. I looked with affectionate veneration and pleasure on the lady, who, having devoted her life and fortune to the service of this tender and sublime genius, in watching over him with maternal vigilance through many years of the darkest calamity, appeared to be now enjoying a reward justly due to the noblest exertions of friendship, in contemplating the health and the renown of the poet, whom she had the happiness to preserve.

"It seemed hardly possible to survey human nature in a more touching and a more satisfactory point of view. Their tender attention to each other, their simple devout gratitude for the mercies which they had experienced together, and their constant, but unaffected propensity to impress on the mind and heart of a new friend the deep sense which they incessantly felt of their mutual obligations to each other, afforded me a very singular gratification; which my reader will conceive the more forcibly, when he has perused the following exquisite sonnet, addressed by Cowper to Mrs. Unwin.

"SONNET.

"Mary! I want a lyre with other strings;
Such aid from Heaven, as some have feign'd they drew!
An eloquence scarce given to mortals, new,
And undebas'd by praise of meaner things!
That ere through age or woe I shed my wings
I may record thy worth, with honour due,
In verse as musical as thou art true,—
Verse that immortalizes whom it sings!

But thou hast little need: There is a book,
By seraphs writ, with beams of heavenly light,
On which the eyes of God not rarely look;
A chronicle of actions, just and bright!

There all thy deeds, my faithful Mary, shine,
And since thou own'st that praise, I spare thee mine.

"The delight that I derived from a perfect view of the virtues, the talents, and the present domestic enjoyments of Cowper, was suddenly overcast by the darkest and most painful anxiety.

"After passing our mornings in social study, we usually walked out together at noon. In returning from one of our rambles around the pleasant village of Weston, we were met by Mr. Greatheed, an accomplished minister of the gospel, who resides at Newport-Pagnel, and whom Cowper described to me in terms of cordial esteem.

"He came forth to meet us as we drew near the house, and it was soon visible from his countenance and manner that he had ill news to impart. After the most tender preparation that humanity could devise, he acquainted Cowper that Mrs. Unwin was under the immediate pressure of a paralytic attack.

"My agitated friend rushed to the sight of the sufferer;—he returned to me in a state that alarmed me in the highest degree for his faculties;—his first speech to me was wild in the extreme;—my answer would appear little less so; but it was addressed to the predominant fancy of my unhappy friend, and, with the blessing of Heaven, it produced an instantaneous calm in his troubled mind.

"From that moment he rested on my friendship, with such mild and cheerful confidence, that his affectionate spirit regarded me as sent providentially to support him in a season of the severest affliction."

The kindness of Hayley, at this critical moment, reflects the highest credit on his humanity and presence of mind. By means of an electrical machine, which the village of Weston fortunately supplied, he succeeded in relieving his suffering patient with the happiest effect. With this seasonable aid, seconded by a course of medicine recommended by Dr. Austen, an eminent London physician, and a friend of Hayley's, the violence of the attack was gradually mitigated, and the agitated mind of Cowper greatly relieved.

The progress of her recovery, and its influence on the tender spirit of Cowper, will sufficiently appear in the following letters.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Weston, May 24, 1792.

I wish with all my heart, my dearest Coz., that I had not ill news for the subject of the present letter. My friend, my Mary, has again been attacked by the same disorder that threatened me last year with the loss of her, and of which you were yourself a witness. Gregson would not allow that first stroke to be paralytic, but this he acknowledges to be so; and with respect to the former, I never had myself any doubt that it was, but this

She was seized while Hayley and I were walking, and Mr. Greatheed, who called while we were absent, was with her.

I forgot in my last to thank thee for the proposed amendments of thy friend. Whoever he is, make my compliments to him, and thank him. The passages to which he objects have been all altered, and when he shall see them new dressed, I hope he will like them better.*

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, May 26, 1792.

My dearest Cousin—Knowing that you will be anxious to learn how we go on, I write a few lines to inform you that Mrs. Unwin daily recovers a little strength and a little power of utterance; but she seems strongest, and her speech is more distinct, in a morning. Hayley has been all in all to us on this very afflictive occasion. Love him, I charge you, dearly for my sake. Where could I have found a man, except himself, who could have made himself so necessary to me in so short a time, that I absolutely know not how to live without him.

Adieu, my dear sweet Coz. Mrs. Unwin, as plainly as her poor lips can speak, sends her best love, and Hayley threatens in a few days to lay close siege to your affections in person.

W. C.

* This friend was Mrs. Carter.

There is some hope, I find, that the Chancellor may continue in office, and I shall be glad if he does; because we have no single man worthy to succeed him

I open my letter again to thank you, my dearest Coz. for yours just received. Though happy, as you well know, to see *you* at all times, we have no need, and I trust shall have none, to trouble you with a journey made on purpose; yet once again, I am willing and desirous to believe, we shall be a happy trio at Weston; but unless necessity dictates a journey of charity, I wish all yours hither to be made for pleasure. Farewell! thou shalt know how we go on.

The tender and grateful mind of Cowper, sensible of the kind and able services of Dr. Austen, led him to pour out the effusions of his heart in the following verses

TO DR. AUSTEN,

OF CECIL STREET, LONDON.

Austen! accept a grateful verse from me!
The poet's treasure! no inglorious fee!
Lov'd by the Muses, thy ingenuous mind
Pleasing requital in a verse may find;
Verse oft has dash'd the scythe of Time aside,
Immortalizing names, which else had died:
And, oh! could I command the glittering wealth
With which sick kings are glad to purchase health:

Yet, if extensive fame, and sure to live,
Were in the power of verse like mine to give,
I would not recompense his art with less,
Who, giving Mary health, heals my distress.

Friend of my friend! I love thee, tho' unknown,
And boldly call thee, being his, my own.

TO MRS. BODHAM.

Weston, June 4, 1792.

My dearest Rose—I am not such an ungrateful and insensible animal, as to have neglected you thus long without a reason. * * *

I cannot say that I am sorry that our dear Johnny finds the pulpit-door shut against him at present.* He is young, and can afford to wait another year; neither is it to be regretted that his time of preparation for an office of so much importance as that of a minister of God's word should have been a little protracted. It is easier to direct the movements of a great army than to guide a few souls to heaven; the way is narrow and full of snares, and the guide himself has the most difficulties to encounter. But I trust he will do well. He is single in his views honest-hearted, and desirous, by prayer and study of the scripture, to qualify himself for the service of his great Master, who will suffer no such man to fail for want of his aid and protection.

W. C.

* Some unexpected difficulties had occurred in obtaining a Curacy with a title for Orders.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.

Weston, June 4, 1792.

ALL'S WELL.

Which words I place as conspicuously as possibly, and prefix them to my letter, to save you the pain, my friend and brother, of a moment's anxious speculation. Poor Mary proceeds in her amendment still, and improves, I think, even at a swifter rate than when you left her. The stronger she grows the faster she gathers strength, which is perhaps the natural course of recovery. She walked so well this morning, that she told me at my first visit she had entirely forgot her illness, and she spoke so distinctly, and had so much of her usual countenance, that had it been possible she would have made me forget it too.

Returned from my walk, blown to tatters—found two dear things in the study, your letter, and my Mary! She is bravely well, and your beloved epistle does us both good. I found your kind pencil note in my song book, as soon as I came down on the morning of your departure, and Mary was vexed to the heart that the simpletons who watched her supposed her asleep when she was not, for she learned, soon after you were gone, that you would have peeped at her, had you known her to have been awake: I perhaps might have had a peep too, and was as vexed as she: but if it please God, we shall make ourselves large amends for all lost peeps by-and-by at Eartham. W. C.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.

Weston, June 5, 1792.

Yesterday was a noble day with us—speech almost perfect—eyes open almost the whole day, without any effort to keep them so; and the step wonderfully improved. But the night has been almost a sleepless one, owing partly I believe to her having had as much sleep again as usual the night before; for even when she is in tolerable health she hardly ever sleeps well two nights together. I found her accordingly a little out of spirits this morning, but still insisting on it that she is better. Indeed she always tells me so, and will probably die with those very words upon her lips. They will be true then at least, for then she will be best of all. She is now (the clock has just struck eleven) endeavouring, I believe, to get a little sleep, for which reason I do not yet let her know that I have received your letter.

Can I ever honour you enough for your zeal to serve me? Truly I think not: I am however so sensible of the love I owe you on this account, that I every day regret the acuteness of your feelings for me, convinced that they expose you to much trouble, mortification, and disappointment. I have in short a poor opinion of my destiny, as I told you when you were here, and, though I believe that if any man living can do me good you will, I cannot yet persuade myself, that even you will be success-

ful in attempting it. But it is no matter; you are yourself a good, which I can never value enough, and, whether rich or poor in other respects, I shall always account myself better provided for than I deserve, with such a friend at my back as you. Let it please God to continue to me my William and Mary, and I will be more reasonable than to grumble.

I rose this morning wrapt round with a cloud of melancholy, and with a heart full of fears, but if I see Mary's amendment a little advanced when she rises, I shall be better.

I have just been with her again. Except that she is fatigued for want of sleep, she seems as well as yesterday. The post brings me a letter from Hurdis, who is broken-hearted for a dying sister. Had we eyes sharp enough, we should see the arrows of death flying in all directions, and account it a wonder that we and our friends escape them but a single day.

W. C.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.

Weston, June 7, 1792.

Of what materials can you suppose me made, if after all the rapid proofs that you have given me of your friendship, I do not love you with all my heart, and regret your absence continually? But you must permit me to be melancholy now and

then; or if you will not, I must be so without your permission; for that sable thread is so intermixed with the very thread of my existence as to be inseparable from it, at least while I exist in the body. Be content, therefore; let me sigh and groan, but always be sure that I love you! You will be well assured that I should not have indulged myself in this rhapsody about myself and my melancholy, had my present mood been of that complexion, or had not our poor Mary seemed still to advance in her recovery. So in fact she does, and has performed several little feats to-day; such as either she could not perform at all, or very feebly, while you were with us.

I shall be glad if you have seen Johnny as I call him, my Norfolk cousin; he is a sweet lad, but as shy as a bird. It costs him always two or three days to open his mouth before a stranger; but when he does, he is sure to please by the innocent cheerfulness of his conversation. His sister too is one of my idols, for the resemblance she bears to my mother.

Mary and you have all my thoughts; and how should it be otherwise? She looks well, is better, and loves you dearly.

Adieu!

My dear brother,

W. C.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.

Weston, June 10, 1792.

I do indeed anxiously wish that every thing you do may prosper; and should I at last prosper by your means, shall taste double sweetness in prosperity for that reason.

I rose this morning, as I usually do, with a mind all in sables. In this mood I presented myself to Mary's bedside, whom I found, though after many hours lying awake, yet cheerful, and not to be affected with my desponding humour. It is a great blessing to us both, that, poor feeble thing as she is, she has a most invincible courage, and a trust in God's goodness, that nothing shakes. She is now in the study, and is certainly in some degree better than she was yesterday, but how to measure that little I know not, except by saying that it is just perceptible.

I am glad that you have seen my Johnny of Norfolk, because I know it will be a comfort to you to have seen your successor. He arrived to my great joy, yesterday; and, not having bound himself to any particular time of going, will, I hope, stay long with us. You are now once more snug in your retreat, and I give you joy of your return to it, after the bustle in which you have lived since you left Weston. Weston mourns your absence, and will mourn it till she sees you again. What is to become of Milton I know not; I do nothing but scribble to you, and seem to have no relish for any

er employment. I have, however, in pursuit of r idea to compliment Darwin, put a few stanzas ether, which I shall subjoin; you will easily give n all that you find they want, and match the ; with another.

am now going to walk with Johnny, much ered since I began writing to you, and by Mary's s and good spirits.

W. C.

TO DR. DARWIN.

AUTHOR OF THE BOTANIC GARDEN.

Two poets (poets by report
Not oft so well agree)
Sweet harmonist of Flora's court!
Conspire to honour thee.

They best can judge a poet's worth,
Who oft themselves have known
The pangs of a poetic birth,
By labours of their own.

We, therefore, pleas'd, extol thy song,
Though various, yet complete,
Rich in embellishment as strong,
And learn'd as it is sweet.

No envy mingles with our praise;
Though, could our hearts repine,
At any poet's happier lays,
They would, they must, at thine.

But we, in mutual bondage knit
Of friendship's closest tie,
Can gaze on even Darwin's wit
With an unjaundic'd eye:

And deem the bard, whoe'er he be,
And howsoever known,
Who would not twine a wreath for thee,
Unworthy of his own.*

* The celebrated poem of "the Botanic Garden," originated in a copy of verses, addressed by Miss Seward to Dr. Darwin, complimenting him on his sequestered retreat near Lichfield. In this retreat there was a mossy fountain of the purest water; aquatic plants bordered its summit, and branched from the fissures of the rock. There was also a brook, which he widened into small lakes. The whole scene formed a little paradise, and was embellished with various classes of plants, uniting the Linnean science, with all the charm of landscape.

When Miss Seward presented her verses to Dr. Darwin, he was highly gratified, she observes, and said, "I shall send this poem to the periodical publications; but it ought to form the exordium of a great work. The Linnean system is unexplored poetic ground, and a happy subject for the muse. It affords fine scope for poetic landscape; it suggests metamorphoses of the Ovidian kind, though reversed. Ovid made men and women into flowers, plants, and trees. You should make flowers, plants, and trees, into men and women. I," continued he, "will write the notes, which must be scientific, and you shall write the verse."

Miss S. remarked, that besides her want of botanic knowledge, the undertaking was not strictly proper for a female pen; and that she felt how much more it was adapted to the ingenuity and vigour of his own fancy. After many objections urged on the part of Dr. Darwin, he at length acquiesced, and ultimately produced his "Loves of the Plants, or Botanic Garden."†

Though this poem obtained much celebrity on its first appearance, it was nevertheless severely animadverted upon by some critics. A writer in the Anti-Jacobin Review, (known to be the late Mr. Canning) parodied the work, by producing

† See Life of Dr. Darwin, by Miss Seward.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Weston, June 11, 1792.

My dearest Coz—Thou art ever in my thoughts, whether I am writing to thee or not, and my correspondence seems to grow upon me at such a rate that I am not able to address thee so often as I would. In fact, I live only to write letters. Hayley is as you see added to the number, and to him I write almost as duly as I rise in the morning; nor is he only added, but his friend Carwardine also—Carwardine the generous, the disinterested, the friendly. I seem, in short, to have stumbled suddenly on a race of heroes, men who resolve to have no interests of their own till mine are served.

But I will proceed to other matters, and that concern me more intimately, and more immediately, than all that can be done for me either by the great,

"The Loves of the Triangles," in which triangles were made to fall in love with the same fervour of passion, as Dr. Darwin attributed to plants. The style, the imagery, and the entire composition of "the Loves of the Plants," were most successfully imitated. We quote the following.

> "In filmy, gauzy, gossamery lines,
> With lucid language, and most dark designs,
> In sweet tetrandryan monogynian strains,
> Pant for a pistil in botanic pains;
> Raise lust in pinks, and with unhallowed fire,
> Bid the soft virgin violet expire."

We do not think that the Botanic Garden ever fully maintained its former estimation, after the keen Attic wit of Mr. Canning, though the concluding lines of Cowper seem to promise perpetuity to its fame.

or the small, or by both united. Since I wrote last, Mrs. Unwin has been continually improving in strength, but at so gradual a rate that I can only mark it by saying that she moves about every day with less support than the former. Her recovery is most of all retarded by want of sleep. On the whole I believe she goes on as well as could be expected, though not quite well enough to satisfy me. And Dr. Austen, speaking from the reports I have made of her, says he has no doubt of her restoration.

During the last two months I seem to myself to have been in a dream. It has been a most eventful period, and fruitful to an uncommon degree, both in good and evil. I have been very ill, and suffered excruciating pain. I recovered, and became quite well again. I received within my doors a man, but lately an entire stranger, and who now loves me as his brother, and forgets himself to serve me. Mrs. Unwin has been seized with an illness that for many days threatened to deprive me of her, and to cast a gloom, an impenetrable one, on all my future prospects. She is now granted to me again. A few days since I should have thought the moon might have descended into my purse as likely as any emolument, and now it seems not impossible. All this has come to pass with such rapidity as events move with in romance indeed, but not often in real life. Events of all sorts creep or fly exactly as God pleases.

To the foregoing I have to add in conclusion, the arrival of my Johnny, just when I wanted him

most, and when only a few days before I had no expectation of him. He came to dinner on Saturday, and I hope I shall keep him long. What comes next I know not, but shall endeavour, as you exhort me, to look for good, and I know I shall have your prayers that I may not be disappointed.

Hayley tells me you begin to be jealous of him, lest I should love him more than I love you, and bids me say, "that, should I do so, you in revenge must love him more than I do." Him I know you will love, and me, because you have such a habit of doing it that you cannot help it.

Adieu! My knuckles ache with letter-writing. With my poor patient's affectionate remembrances, and Johnny's,

I am ever thine,

W. C.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.

Weston, June 19, 1792.

..... Thus have I filled a whole page to my dear William of Eartham, and have not said a syllable yet about my Mary. A sure sign that she goes on well. Be it known to you that we have these four days discarded our sedan with two elbows. Here is no more carrying, or being carried, but she walks up stairs boldly, with one hand upon the balustrade, and the other under my arm, and in like manner she comes down in a morning. Still I confess she is feeble, and misses much of her former strength. The weather too is sadly against

her: it deprives her of many a good turn in the orchard, and fifty times have I wished this very day, that Dr. Darwin's scheme of giving rudders and sails* to the Ice Islands, that spoil all our summers, were actually put into practice. So should we have gentle airs instead of churlish blasts, and those everlasting sources of bad weather being once navigated into the Southern hemisphere, my Mary would recover as fast again. We are both of your mind respecting the journey to Eartham, and think

* That a very perceptible change, generally speaking, has taken place in the climate of Great Britain, and that the same observation applies to other countries, has been a frequent subject of remark, both with the past and present generation. Various causes have been assigned for this peculiarity. It has been said that nature is growing old, and losing its elasticity and vigour. Others have attributed the change to the vast accumulation of ice in the Polar regions, and its consequent influence on the temperature of the air. Dr. Darwin humorously suggested the scheme of giving rudders and sails to the Ice Islands, that they might be wafted by northern gales, and thus be absorbed by the heat of a southern latitude. It is worthy of remark that in Milton's Latin Poems, there is a college thesis on this subject, viz. whether nature was becoming old and infirm. Milton took the negative of this proposition, and maintained, *naturam non pati senium*, that nature was not growing old. Cowper, in his translation of this poem, thus renders some of the passages.

How?—Shall the face of nature then be plough'd
Into deep wrinkles, and shall years at last
On the great Parent fix a sterile curse?
Shall even she confess old age, and halt,
And, palsy-smitten, shake her starry brows?—
Shall Time's unsated maw crave and ingulph
The very heav'ns, that regulate his flight?—

that July, if by that time she have strength for the journey, will be better than August. We shall have more long days before us, and them we shall want as much for our return as for our going forth. This, however, must be left to the Giver of all Good. If our visit to you be according to his will, he will smooth our way before us, and appoint the time of it, and I thus speak, not because I wish to

No. The Almighty Father surer laid
His deep foundations, and providing well
For the event of all, the scales of Fate
Suspended, in just equipoise, and bade
His universal works, from age to age,
One tenour hold, perpetual, undisturb'd.—
Not tardier now is Saturn than of old,
Nor radiant less the burning casque of Mars.
Phœbus, his vigour unimpair'd, still shows
Th' effulgence of his youth, nor needs the god
A downward course, that he may warm the vales;
But, ever rich in influence, runs his road,
Sign after sign, through all the heavenly zone.
Beautiful, as at first, ascends the star
From odorif'rous Ind, whose office is
To gather home betimes th' ethereal flock,
To pour them o'er the skies again at eve,
And to discriminate the night and day.
Still Cynthia's changeful horn waxes and wanes
Alternate, and with arms extended still,
She welcomes to her breast her brother's beams.
Nor have the elements deserted yet
Their functions.—
Thus, in unbroken series, all proceeds;
And shall, till, wide involving either pole
And the immensity of yonder heav'n,
The final flames of destiny absorb
The world, consum'd in one enormous pyre!

seem a saint in your eyes, but because my poor Mary actually is one, and would not set her foot over the threshold, unless she had, or thought she had, God's free permission. With that she would go through floods and fire, though without it she would be afraid of every thing—afraid even to visit you, dearly as she loves, and much as she longs to see you.

W. C

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.

Weston, June 27, 1792.

Well then—let us talk about this journey to Eartham. You wish me to settle the time of it, and I wish with all my heart to be able to do so, living in hopes meanwhile that I shall be able to do it soon. But some little time must necessarily intervene. Our Mary must be able to walk alone, to cut her own food, feed herself, and to wear her own shoes, for at present she wears mine. All things considered, my friend and brother, you will see the expediency of waiting a little before we set off to Eartham. We mean indeed before that day arrives to make a trial of the strength of her head, how far it may be able to bear the motion of a carriage, a motion that it has not felt these seven years. I grieve that we are thus circumstanced, and that we cannot gratify ourselves in a delightful and innocent project without all these precautions, but when we have leaf-gold to handle, we must do it tenderly.

I thank you, my brother, both for presenting my authorship* to your friend Guy, and for the excellent verses with which you have inscribed your present. There are none neater or better turned—with what shall I requite you? I have nothing to send you but a gimcrack, which I have prepared for my bride and bridegroom neighbours, who are expected to-morrow! You saw in my book a poem entitled Catharina, which concluded with a wish that we had her for a neighbour:† this therefore is called

CATHARINA:

(*The Second Part,*)

ON HER MARRIAGE TO GEORGE COURTENAY, ESQ.

Believe it or not, as you choose,
The doctrine is certainly true,
That the future is known to the muse,
And poets are oracles too

I did but express a desire
To see Catharina at home,
At the side of my friend George's fire,
And lo! she is actually come.

And such prophecy some may despise,
But the wish of a poet and friend
Perhaps is approv'd in the skies,
And therefore attains to its end.

'Twas a wish that flew ardently forth,
From a bosom effectually warm'd
With the talents, the graces, and worth,
Of the person for whom it was form'd.

* Verses on Dr. Darwin. † See vol. iv. p. 230—232.

Maria would leave us, I knew,
To the grief and regret of us all;
But less to our grief could we view
Catharina the queen of the Hall.

And therefore I wish'd as I did,
And therefore this union of hands,
Not a whisper was heard to forbid,
But all cry amen to the bands.

Since therefore I seem to incur
No danger of wishing in vain,
When making good wishes for her,
I will e'en to my wishes again.

With one I have made her a wife,
And now I will try with another,
Which I cannot suppress for my life,
How soon I can make her a mother.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.

Weston, July 4, 1792.

I know not how you proceed in your life of Milton, but I suppose not very rapidly, for while you were here, and since you left us, you have had no other theme but me. As for myself, except my letters to you and the nuptial song I inserted in my last, I have literally done nothing since I saw you. Nothing, I mean, in the writing way, though a great deal in another; that is to say, in attending my poor Mary, and endeavouring to nurse her up for a journey to Eartham. In this I have hitherto succeeded tolerably well, and had rather carry this point completely than be the most famous

editor of Milton that the world has ever seen or shall see.

Your humorous descant upon my art of wishing made us merry, and consequently did good to us both. I sent my wish to the Hall yesterday. They are excellent neighbours, and so friendly to me that I wished to gratify them. When I went to pay my first visit, George flew into the court to meet me, and when I entered the parlour Catharina sprang into my arms.

W. C.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.

Weston, July 15, 1792.

The progress of the old nurse in Terence is very much like the progress of my poor patient in the road of recovery. I cannot, indeed, say that she moves but advances not, for advances are certainly made, but the progress of a week is hardly perceptible. I know not therefore, at present, what to say about this long-postponed journey. The utmost that it is safe for me to say at this moment is this—You know that you are dear to us both: true it is that you are so, and equally true that the very instant we feel ourselves at liberty, we will fly to Eartham. I have been but once within the Hall door since the Courtenays came home, much as I have been pressed to dine there, and have hardly escaped giving a little offence by declining it: but, though I should offend all the world by my ob-

stinacy in this instance, I would not leave my poor Mary alone. Johnny serves me as a representative, and him I send without scruple. As to the affair of Milton, I know not what will become of it. I wrote to Johnson a week since to tell him that, the interruption of Mrs. Unwin's illness still continuing, and being likely to continue, I knew not when I should be able to proceed. The translations (I said) were finished, except the revisal of a part.

God bless your dear little boy and poet! I thank him for exercising his dawning genius upon me, and shall be still happier to thank him in person.

Abbot is painting me so true,
That (trust me) you would stare
And hardly know, at the first view,
If I were here or there.*

I have sat twice; and the few who have seen his copy of me are much struck with the resemblance. He is a sober, quiet man, which, considering that I must have him at least a week longer for an inmate, is a great comfort to me.

My Mary sends you her best love. She can walk now, leaning on my arm only, and her speech is certainly much improved. I long to see you. Why cannot you and dear Tom spend the remainder of

* This portrait was taken at the instance of Dr. Johnson, and is thought most to resemble Cowper. It is now in the possession of Dr. Johnson's family, and represents the poet in a sitting posture, in an evening dress.

the summer with us? We might then all set off for Eartham merrily together. But I retract this, conscious that I am unreasonable. It is a wretched world, and what we would is almost always what we cannot

Adieu! Love me, and be sure of a return.

W. C.

TO THOMAS PARK, ESQ.

Weston Underwood, July 20, 1792.

Dear Sir—I have been long silent, and must now be short. My time since I wrote last has been almost wholly occupied in suffering. Either indisposition of my own, or of the dearest friend I have,* has so entirely engaged my attention, that, except the revision of the two elegies you sent me long since, I have done nothing; nor do I at present foresee the day when I shall be able to do any thing. Should Mrs. Unwin recover sufficiently to undertake a journey, I have promised Mr. Hayley to close the summer with a visit to him at Eartham. At the best, therefore, I cannot expect to proceed in my main business, till the approach of winter. I am thus thrown so much into arrear respecting Milton, that I already despair of being ready at the time appointed, and so I have told my employer.

I need not say that the drift of this melancholy preface is to apprize you that you must not expect

* Mrs. Unwin.

dispatch from me. Such expedition as I can use I will, but I believe you must be very patient.

It was only one year that I gave to drawing, for I found it an employment hurtful to my eyes, which have always been weak and subject to inflammation. I finished my attempt in this way with three small landscapes, which I presented to a lady. These may, perhaps, exist, but I have now no correspondence with the fair proprietor. Except these, there is nothing remaining to show that I ever aspired to such an accomplishment.

The hymns in the Olney collection marked (C,) are all of my composition, except one, which bears that initial by a mistake of the printer. Not having the book at hand, I cannot now say which it is.

Wishing you a pleasant time at Margate, and assuring you that I shall receive, with great pleasure, any drawing of yours with which you may favour me, and give it a distinguished place in my very small collection,

I remain, dear sir,

Much and sincerely yours,

W. C.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.

Weston, July 22, 1792.

This important affair, my dear brother, is at last decided, and we are coming. Wednesday se'nnight, if nothing occur to make a later day necessary, is

the day fixed for our journey. Our rate of travelling must depend on Mary's ability to bear it. Our mode of travelling will occupy three days unavoidably, for we shall come in a coach. Abbot finishes my picture to-morrow; on Wednesday he returns to town, and is commissioned to order one down for us, with four steeds to draw it;

> "Hollow pamper'd jades of Asia,
> That cannot go but forty miles a day."

Send us our route, for I am as ignorant of it almost as if I were in a strange country. We shall reach St. Alban's, I suppose, the first day; say where we must finish our second day's journey, and at what inn we may best repose? As to the end of the third day, we know where that will find us, viz. in the arms, and under the roof, of our beloved Hayley.

General Cowper, having heard a rumour of this intended migration, desires to meet me on the road, that we may once more see each other. He lives at Ham, near Kingston. Shall we go through Kingston, or near it? For I would give him as little trouble as possible, though he offers very kindly to come as far as Barnet for that purpose. Nor must I forget Carwardine, who so kindly desired to be informed what way we should go. On what point of the road will it be easiest for him to find us? On all these points you must be my oracle. My friend and brother, we shall overwhelm you with our numbers; this is all the trouble that I have left. My Johnny of Norfolk, happy in the thought

of accompanying us, would be broken-hearted to be left behind.

In the midst of all these solicitudes, I laugh to think what they are made of, and what an important thing it is for me to travel. Other men steal away from their homes silently, and make no disturbance, but when I move, houses are turned upside down, maids are turned out of their beds, all the counties through which I pass appear to be in an uproar——Surrey greets me by the mouth of the General, and Essex by that of Carwardine. How strange does all this seem to a man who has seen no bustle, and made none, for twenty years together!

Adieu!

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM BULL. *

July 25, 1792.

My dear Mr. Bull—Engaged as I have been ever since I saw you, it was not possible that I should write sooner; and, busy as I am at present, it is not without difficulty that I can write even now: but I promised you a letter, and must endeavour, at least to be as good as my word. How do you imagine I have been occupied these last ten days? In sitting, not on cockatrice' eggs, nor yet to gratify a mere idle humour, nor because I was too sick to move; but because my cousin Johnson

* Private Correspondence.

has an aunt who has a longing desire of my picture, and because he would, therefore, bring a painter from London to draw it. For this purpose I have been sitting, as I say, these ten days; and am heartily glad that my sitting time is over. You have now, I know, a burning curiosity to learn two things, which I may choose whether I will tell you or not; First, who was the painter; and secondly, how he has succeeded. The painter's name is Abbot. You never heard of him, you say. It is very likely; but there is, nevertheless, such a painter, and an excellent one he is. *Multa sunt quæ bonus Bernardus nec vidit, nec audivit.* To your second inquiry I answer, that he has succeeded to admiration. The likeness is so strong, that when my friends enter the room where the picture is, they start, astonished to see me where they know I am not. Miserable man that you are, to be at Brighton instead of being here, to contemplate this prodigy of art, which, therefore, you can never see; for it goes to London next Monday, to be suspended awhile at Abbot's; and then proceeds into Norfolk, where it will be suspended for ever.

But the picture is not the only prodigy I have to tell you of. A greater belongs to me; and one that you will hardly credit, even on my own testimony. We are on the eve of a journey, and a long one On this very day se'nnight we set out for Eartham, the seat of my brother bard, Mr. Hayley, on the other side of London, nobody knows where, a hundred and twenty miles off. Pray for us, my friend, that we may have a safe going and return.

It is a tremendous exploit, and I feel a thousand anxieties when I think of it. But a promise, made to him when he was here, that we would go if we could, and a sort of persuasion that we can if we will, oblige us to it. The journey, and the change of air, together with the novelty to us of the scene to which we are going, may, I hope, be useful to us both; especially to Mrs. Unwin, who has most need of restoratives. She sends her love to you and to Thomas, in which she is sincerely joined by

Your affectionate

W. C.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.

Weston, July 29, 1792.

Through floods and flames to your retreat
I win my desp'rate way,
And when we meet, if e'er we meet,
Will echo your huzza.

You will wonder at the word *desp'rate* in the second line, and at the *if* in the third; but could you have any conception of the fears I have had to bustle with, of the dejection of spirits that I have suffered concerning this journey, you would wonder much more that I still courageously persevere in my resolution to undertake it. Fortunately for my intentions, it happens, that as the day approaches my terrors abate; for had they continued to be what they were a week since, I must, after all, have disappointed you; and was actually once on

the verge of doing it. I have told you something of my nocturnal experiences, and assure you now, that they were hardly ever more terrific than on this occasion. Prayer has however opened my passage at last, and obtained for me a degree of confidence that I trust will prove a comfortable viaticum to me all the way. On Wednesday therefore we set forth.

The terrors that I have spoken of would appear ridiculous to most, but to you they will not, for you are a reasonable creature, and know well that, to whatever cause it be owing (whether to constitution, or to God's express appointment) I am hunted by spiritual hounds in the night season. I cannot help it. You will pity me, and wish it were otherwise; and, though you may think there is much of the imaginary in it, will not deem it for that reason an evil less to be lamented—so much for fears and distresses. Soon I hope they shall all have a joyful termination, and I, my Mary, my Johnny, and my dog, be skipping with delight at Eartham!

Well! this picture is at last finished, and well finished, I can assure you. Every creature that has seen it has been astonished at the resemblance. Sam's boy bowed to it, and Beau walked up to it, wagging his tail as he went, and evidently showing that he acknowledged its likeness to his master. It is a half-length, as it is technically but absurdly called; that is to say, it gives all but the foot and ankle. To-morrow it goes to town, and will hang

some months at Abbot's, when it will be sent to its due destination in Norfolk.†

I hope, or rather wish, that at Eartham I may recover that habit of study which, inveterate as it once seemed, I now seem to have lost—lost to such a degree, that it is even painful to me to think of what it will cost me to acquire it again.

Adieu! my dear, dear Hayley; God give us a happy meeting. Mary sends her love—She is in pretty good plight this morning, having slept well, and for her part, has no fears at all about the journey.

Ever yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

July 30, 1792.

My dear Friend—Like you, I am obliged to snatch short opportunities of corresponding with my friends; and to write what I can, not what I would. Your kindness in giving me the first letter after your return claims my thanks; and my tardiness to answer it would demand an apology, if, having been here, and witnessed how much my time is occupied in attendance on my poor patient, you could possibly want one. She proceeds, I trust, in her recovery; but at so slow a rate, that the difference made in a week is hardly perceptible to me, who am always with her. This

* To Mrs. Bodham's. † Private Correspondence.

last night has been the worst she has known since her illness—entirely sleepless till seven in the morning. Such ill rest seems but an indifferent preparation for a long journey, which we purpose to undertake on Wednesday, when we set out for Eartham, on a visit to Mr. Hayley. The journey itself will, I hope, be useful to her; and the air of the sea, blowing over the South Downs, together with the novelty of the scene to us, will, I hope, be serviceable to us both. You may imagine that we, who have been resident on one spot so many years, do not engage in such an enterprise without some anxiety. Persons accustomed to travel would make themselves merry with mine; it seems so disproportioned to the occasion. Once I have been in the point of determining not to go, and even since we fixed the day; my troubles have been so insupportable. But it has been made a matter of much prayer, and at last it has pleased God to satisfy me, in some measure, that his will corresponds with our purpose, and that He will afford us his protection. You, I know, will not be unmindful of us during our absence from home; but will obtain for us, if your prayers can do it, all that we would ask for ourselves—the presence and favour of God, a salutary effect of our journey, and a safe return.

I rejoiced, and had reason to do so, in your coming to Weston, for I think the Lord came with you. Not, indeed, to abide with me; not to restore me to that intercourse with Him which I enjoyed twenty years ago; but to awaken in me,

however, more spiritual feeling than I have experienced, except in two instances, during all that time. The comforts that I had received under your ministry, in better days, all rushed upon my recollection; and, during two or three transient moments, seemed to be in a degree renewed. You will tell me that, transient as they were, they were yet evidences of a love that is not so; and I am desirous to believe it.

With Mrs. Unwin's warm remembrances, and my cousin Johnson's best compliments, I am

Sincerely yours,

W. C.

P. S.—If I hear from you while I am abroad, your letter will find me at William Hayley's, Esq. Eartham, near Chichester. We propose to return in about a month.

Cowper records the particulars of this visit in the following Letters.

TO THE REV. MR. GREATHEED.

Eartham, Aug. 6, 1792.

My dear Sir—Having first thanked you for your affectionate and acceptable letter, I will proceed, as well as I can, to answer your equally affectionate request, that I would send you early news of our arrival at Eartham. Here we are in the most elegant mansion that I have ever inhabited, and surrounded by the most delightful pleasure-grounds

that I have ever seen; but which, dissipated as my powers of thought are at present, I will not undertake to describe. It shall suffice me to say, that they occupy three sides of a hill, which in Buckinghamshire might well pass for a mountain, and from the summit of which is beheld a most magnificent landscape bounded by the sea, and in one part by the Isle of Wight, which may also be seen plainly from the window of the library, in which I am writing.

It pleased God to carry us both through the journey with far less difficulty and inconvenience than I expected. I began it indeed with a thousand fears, and when we arrived the first evening at Barnet, found myself oppressed in spirit to a degree that could hardly be exceeded. I saw Mrs. Unwin weary, as she might well be, and heard such noises, both within the house and without, that I concluded she would get no rest. But I was mercifully disappointed. She rested, though not well, yet sufficiently; and when we finished our next day's journey at Ripley, we were both in better condition, both of body and mind, than on the day preceding. At Ripley we found a quiet inn, that housed, as it happened, that night, no company but ourselves. There we slept well, and rose perfectly refreshed; and, except some terrors that I felt at passing over the Sussex hills by moonlight, met with little to complain of, till we arrived about ten o'clock at Eartham. Here we are as happy as it is in the power of terrestrial good to make us. It is almost a paradise in which we dwell; and our reception

has been the kindest that it was possible for friendship and hospitality to contrive. Our host mentions you with great respect, and bids me tell you that he esteems you highly. Mrs. Unwin, who is, I think, in some points, already the better for her excursion, unites with mine her best compliments both to yourself and Mrs. Greatheed. I have much to see and enjoy before I can be perfectly apprized of all the delights of Eartham, and will therefore now subscribe myself

Yours,
My dear Sir,
With great sincerity,
W. C.

TO MRS. COURTENAY.

Eartham, August 12, 1792.

My dearest Catharina—Though I have travelled far, nothing did I see in my travels that surprised me half so agreeably as your kind letter; for high as my opinion of your good-nature is, I had no hopes of hearing from you till I should have written first; a pleasure which I intended to allow myself the first opportunity.

After three days' confinement in a coach, and suffering as we went all that could be suffered from excessive heat and dust, we found ourselves late in the evening at the door of our friend Hayley. In every other respect the journey was extremely pleasant. At the Mitre, in Barnet, where we lodged

the first evening, we found our friend Rose, who had walked thither from his house in Chancery-lane to meet us; and at Kingston, where we dined the second day, I found my old and much-valued friend, General Cowper, whom I had not seen in thirty years, and but for this journey should never have seen again. Mrs. Unwin, on whose account I had a thousand fears, before we set out, suffered as little from fatigue as myself, and begins, I hope, already to feel some beneficial effects from the air of Eartham, and the exercise that she takes in one of the most delightful pleasure-grounds in the world. They occupy three sides of a hill, lofty enough to command a view of the sea, which skirts the horizon to a length of many miles, with the Isle of Wight at the end of it. The inland scene is equally beautiful, consisting of a large and deep valley well cultivated, and inclosed by magnificent hills, all crowned with wood. I had, for my part, no conception that a poet could be the owner of such a paradise; and his house is as elegant as his scenes are charming.*

But think not, my dear Catharina, that amidst all these beauties I shall lose the remembrance of the peaceful, but less splendid, Weston. Your precincts will be as dear to me as ever, when I return; though when that day will arrive I know not, our host being determined, as I plainly see, to keep us as long as possible. Give my best love to your husband. Thank him most kindly for his attention to the old

* This residence afterwards became the property of the late William Huskisson, Esq.

bard of Greece, and pardon me that I do not now send you an epitaph for Fop. I am not sufficiently recollected to compose even a bagatelle at present; but in due time you shall receive it.

Hayley, who will some time or other I hope see you at Weston, is already prepared to love you both, and, being passionately fond of music, longs much to hear you.

Adieu,

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

Eartham, August 14, 1792.

My dear Friend—Romney is here: it would add much to my happiness if you were of the party; I have prepared Hayley to think highly, that is justly, of you, and the time, I hope, will come when you will supersede all need of my recommendation.

Mrs. Unwin gathers strength. I have indeed great hopes, from the air and exercise which this fine season affords her opportunity to use, that ere we return she will be herself again.

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

Eartham, August 18, 1792.

Wishes in this world are generally vain, and in the next we shall make none. Every day I wish you were of the party, knowing how happy you

would be in a place where we have nothing to do but enjoy beautiful scenery and converse agreeably.

Mrs. Unwin's health continues to improve; and even I, who was well when I came, find myself still better.

Yours,

W. C.

TO MRS. COURTENAY

Eartham, August 25, 1792.

Without waiting for an answer to my last, I send my dear Catharina the epitaph she desired, composed as well as I could compose it in a place where every object, being still new to me, distracts my attention, and makes me as awkward at verse as if I had never dealt in it. Here it is.

EPITAPH ON FOP;

A DOG, BELONGING TO LADY THROCKMORTON.

Though once a puppy, and though Fop by name,
Here moulders one, whose bones some honour clai n;
No sycophant, although of spaniel race!
And though no hound, a martyr to the chace!
Ye squirrels, rabbits, leverets, rejoice!
Your haunts no longer echo to his voice.
This record of his fate exulting view,
He died worn out with vain pursuit of you!

"Yes!" the indignant shade of Fop replies,
"And worn with vain pursuit, man also dies!"

I am here, as I told you in my last, delightfully situated, and in the enjoyment of all that the most friendly hospitality can impart; yet do I neither forget Weston, nor my friends at Weston: on the

contrary, I have at length, though much and kindly pressed to make a longer stay, determined on the day of our departure—on the seventeenth of September we shall leave Eartham; four days will be necessary to bring us home again, for I am under a promise to General Cowper to dine with him on the way, which cannot be done comfortably, either to him or to ourselves, unless we sleep that night at Kingston.

The air of this place has been, I believe, beneficial to us both. I indeed was in tolerable health before I set out, but have acquired since I came, both a better appetite and a knack of sleeping almost as much in a single night as formerly in two. Whether double quantities of that article will be favourable to me as a poet, time must show. About myself, however, I care little, being made of materials so tough, as not to threaten me even now, at the end of so many *lustrums*, with any thing like a speedy dissolution. My chief concern has been about Mrs. Unwin, and my chief comfort at this moment is, that she likewise has received, I hope, considerable benefit by the journey.

Tell my dear George that I begin to long to behold him again, and, did it not savour of ingratitude to the friend under whose roof I am so happy at present, should be impatient to find myself once more under yours.

Adieu! my dear Catharina. I have nothing to add in the way of news, except that Romney has drawn me in crayons, by the suffrage of all here, *extremely* like. W. C.

TO THE REV. MR. HURDIS.

Eartham, August 26, 1792.

My dear Sir—Your kind but very affecting letter found me not at Weston, to which place it was directed, but in a bower of my friend Hayley's garden at Eartham, where I was sitting with Mrs. Unwin. We both knew the moment we saw it from whom it came, and, observing a red seal, both comforted ourselves that all was well at Burwash: but we soon felt that we were not called to rejoice, but to mourn with you;* we do indeed sincerely mourn with you, and, if it will afford you any consolation to know it, you may be assured that every eye here has testified what our hearts have suffered for you. Your loss is great, and your disposition I perceive such as exposes you to feel the whole weight of it: I will not add to your sorrow by a vain attempt to assuage it; your own good sense, and the piety of your principles, will, of course, suggest to you the most powerful motives of acquiescence in the will of God. You will be sure to recollect that the stroke, severe as it is, is not the stroke of an enemy, but of a father; and will find I trust, hereafter, that like a father he has done you good by it. Thousands have been able to say, and myself as loud as any of them, it has been good for me that I was afflicted; but time is necessary to work us to this persuasion, and in due time it shall be yours. Mr. Hayley, who tenderly sympathizes

* Mr. Hurdis had just lost a favourite sister.

with you, has enjoined me to send you as pressing an invitation as I can frame, to join me at this place. I have every motive to wish your consent; both your benefit and my own, which, I believe, would be abundantly answered by your coming, ought to make me eloquent in such a cause. Here you will find silence and retirement in perfection, when you would seek them; and here such company as I have no doubt would suit you, all cheerful, but not noisy; and all alike disposed to love you: you and I seem to have here a fair opportunity of meeting. It were a pity we should be in the same county and not come together. I am here till the seventeenth of September, an interval that will afford you time to make the necessary arrangements, and to gratify me at last with an interview, which I have long desired. Let me hear from you soon, that I may have double pleasure, the pleasure of expecting as well as that of seeing you.

Mrs. Unwin, I thank God, though still a sufferer by her last illness, is much better, and has received considerable benefit by the air of Eartham. She adds to mine her affectionate compliments, and joins me and Hayley in this invitation.

Mr. Romney is here, and a young man a cousin of mine. I tell you who we are, that you may not be afraid of us.

Adieu! May the Comforter of all the afflicted, who seek him, be yours! God bless you!

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Eartham, August 26, 1792.

I know not how it is, my dearest Coz, but, in a new scene and surrounded with strange objects, I find my powers of thinking dissipated to a degree, that makes it difficult to me even to write a letter, and even a letter to you; but such a letter as I can, I will, and have the fairest chance to succeed this morning, Hayley, Romney, Hayley's son, and Beau, being all gone together to the sea for bathing. The sea, you must know, is nine miles off, so that, unless stupidity prevent, I shall have opportunity to write not only to you, but to poor Hurdis also, who is broken-hearted for the loss of his favourite sister, lately dead; and whose letter, giving an account of it, which I received yesterday, drew tears from the eyes of all our party. My only comfort respecting even yourself is, that you write in good spirits, and assure me that you are in a state of recovery; otherwise I should mourn not only for Hurdis, but for myself, lest a certain event should reduce me, and in a short time too, to a situation as distressing as his; for though nature designed you only for my cousin, you have had a sister's place in my affections ever since I knew you. The reason is, I suppose, that, having no sister, the daughter of my own mother, I thought it proper to have one, the daughter of yours. Certain it is, that I can by no means afford to lose you, and that, unless you will be upon honour with me to give me always a true

account of yourself, at least when we are not together, I shall always be unhappy, because always suspicious that you deceive me.

Now for ourselves. I am, without the least dissimulation, in good health; my spirits are about as good as you have ever seen them; and if increase of appetite, and a double portion of sleep, be advantageous, such are the advantages that I have received from this migration. As to that gloominess of mind, which I have had these twenty years, it cleaves to me even here, and, could I be translated to Paradise, unless I left my body behind me, would cleave to me even there also. It is my companion for life, and nothing will ever divorce us. So much for myself. Mrs. Unwin is evidently the better for her jaunt, though by no means as she was before this last attack; still wanting help when she would rise from her seat, and a support in walking; but she is able to use more exercise than she could at home, and moves with rather a less tottering step God knows what he designs for me, but when I see those who are dearer to me than myself distempered and enfeebled, and myself as strong as in the days of my youth, I tremble for the solitude in which a few years may place me. I wish her and you to die before me, but not till I am more likely to follow immediately. Enough of this!

Romney has drawn me in crayons, and, in the opinion of all here, with his best hand, and with the most exact resemblance possible.*

* This portrait is now in the possession of Dr. Johnson's *family*.

The seventeenth of September is the day on which I intend to leave Eartham. We shall then have been six weeks resident here; a holiday time long enough for a man who has much to do. And now, farewell!

W. C.

P. S. Hayley, whose love for me seems to be truly that of a brother, has given me his picture, drawn by Romney, about fifteen years ago: an admirable likeness.

TO MRS. CHARLOTTE SMITH.*

Eartham, Sept. 1792.

Dear Madam—Your two counsellors are of one mind. We both are of opinion that you will do well to make your second volume a suitable companion to the first, by embellishing it in the same manner; and have no doubt, considering the well-deserved popularity of your verse, that the expense will be amply refunded by the public.

I would give you, Madam, not my counsel only, but consolation also, were I not disqualified for that delightful service by a great dearth of it in my own experience. I too often seek but cannot find it. Of this, however, I can assure you, if that may at all comfort you, that both my friend Hayley and myself most truly sympathize with you under all your sufferings. Neither have you, I am persuaded, in any degree lost the interest you always had in

* Private Correspondence.

him, or your claim to any service that it may be in his power to render you. Had you no other title to his esteem, his respect for your talents, and his feelings for your misfortunes, must insure to you the friendship of such a man for ever. I know, however, there are seasons when, look which way we will, we see the same dismal gloom enveloping all objects. This is itself an affliction; and the worse, because it makes us think ourselves more unhappy than we are: and at such a season it is, I doubt not, that you suspect a diminution of our friend's zeal to serve you.

I was much struck by an expression in your letter to Hayley, where you say that you "will endeavour to take an interest in green leaves again." This seems the sound of my own voice reflected to me from a distance; I have so often had the same thought and desire. A day scarcely passes, at this season of the year, when I do not contemplate the trees so soon to be stript, and say, "Perhaps I shall never see you clothed again." Every year, as it passes, makes this expectation more reasonable; and the year with me cannot be very distant, when the event will verify it. Well, may God grant us a good hope of arriving in due time where the leaves never fall, and all will be right!

Mrs. Unwin, I think, is a little better than when you saw her; but still so feeble as to keep me in a state of continual apprehension. I live under the point of a sword suspended by a hair. Adieu, my dear Madam; and believe me to remain your sincere and affectionate humble servant,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Eartham, Sept. 9, 1792.

My dearest Cousin—I determine, if possible, to send you one more letter, or at least, if possible, once more to send you something like one, before we leave Eartham. But I am in truth so unaccountably local in the use of my pen, that, like the man in the fable, who could leap well no where but at Rhodes, I seem incapable of writing at all, except at Weston. This is, as I have already told you, a delightful place; more beautiful scenery I have never beheld, nor expect to behold; but the charms of it, uncommon as they are, have not in the least alienated my affections from Weston. The genius of that place suits me better, it has an air of snug concealment, in which a disposition like mine feels peculiarly gratified; whereas here I see from every window woods like forests, and hills like mountains, a wildness, in short, that rather increases my natural melancholy, and which, were it not for the agreeables I find within, would soon convince me that mere change of place can avail me little. Accordingly, I have not looked out for a house in Sussex, nor shall.

The intended day of our departure continues to be the seventeenth. I hope to re-conduct Mrs. Unwin to the Lodge with her health considerably mended; but it is in the article of speech chiefly, and in her powers of walking, that she is sensible of much improvement. Her sight and her hand

still fail her, so that she can neither read nor work; both mortifying circumstances to her, who is never willingly idle.

On the eighteenth I purpose to dine with the General, and to rest that night at Kingston, but the pleasure I shall have in the interview will hardly be greater than the pain I shall feel at the end of it, for we shall part, probably, to meet no more.

Johnny, I know, has told you that Mr. Hurdis is here. Distressed by the loss of his sister, he has renounced the place where she died for ever, and is about to enter on a new course of life at Oxford. You would admire him much. He is gentle in his manners, and delicate in his person, resembling our poor friend Unwin, both in face and figure, more than any one I have seen. But he has not, at least he has not at present, his vivacity.

I have corresponded since I came here with Mrs. Courtenay, and had yesterday a very kind letter from her.

Adieu, my dear; may God bless you. Write to me as soon as you can after the twentieth. I shall then be at Weston, and indulging myself in the hope that I shall ere long see you there also.

W. C.

Hayley, speaking of the manner in which they employed their time at Eartham, observes, "Homer was not the immediate object of our attention. The morning hours that we could bestow upon books were chiefly devoted to a complete revisal and correction of all the translations, which my friend had

finished, from the Latin and Italian poetry of Milton: and we generally amused ourselves after dinner in forming together a rapid metrical version of Andreini's Adamo.* He also mentions the interest excited in Cowper's mind by his son, a fine boy of eleven years, whose uncommon talents and engaging qualities endeared him so much to the poet, that he allowed and invited him to criticise his Homer. A specimen of this juvenile criticism will appear in the future correspondence. This interesting boy, with a young companion, employed themselves regularly twice a day in drawing Mrs. Unwin in a commodious garden-chair, round the airy hill at Eartham. "To Cowper and to me," he adds, "it was a very pleasing spectacle to see the benevolent vivacity of blooming youth thus continually labouring for the ease, health, and amusement of disabled age."

* This is one of those scarce and curious books which is not to be procured without difficulty. It is a dramatic representation of the Fall, remarkable, not so much for any peculiar vigour, either in the conception or execution of the plan, as for exhibiting that mode of celebrating sacred subjects, formerly known under the appellation of mysteries. A further interest is also attached to it from the popular persuasion that this work first suggested to Milton the design of his Paradise Lost. There is the same allegorical imagery, and sufficient to form the frame-work of that immortal poem. Johnson, in his Life of Milton, alludes to the report, without arriving at any decided conclusion on the subject, but states, that Milton's original intention was to have formed, not a narrative, but a dramatic work, and that he subsequently began to reduce it to its present form, about the year 1655. Some sketches of this plan are to be seen in the library of Trinity College, Cam-

The reader will perceive from the last letter, that Cowper, amused as he was with the scenery of Sussex, began to feel the powerful attraction of home.

bridge. Dr. Joseph Warton and Hayley both incline to the opinion that the Adamo of Andreini first suggested the hint of the Paradise Lost.

That the Italians claim this honour for their countryman is evident from the following passage from Tiraboschi, which, to those of our readers who are conversant with that language, will be an interesting quotation. "Certo benche L'Adamo dell Andreini sia in confronto del Paradiso Perduto ciò che è il Poema di Ennio in confronto a quel di Virgilio, nondimeno non può negarsi che le idee gigantesche, delle quali l' autore Inglese ha abbellito il suo Poema, di Satana, che entra nel Paradiso terrestre, e arde d' invidia al vedere la felicita dell' Uomo, del congresso de Demonj, della battaglia degli Angioli contra Lucifero, e più altre sommiglianti immagini veggonsi nell' *Adamo* adombrate per modo, che a me sembra molto credibile, che anche il Milton dalle immondezze, se così è lecito dire, dell 'Andreini raccogliesse l'oro, di cui adorno il suo Poema. Per altro *L'Adamo* dell' Andreini, benche abbia alcuni tratti di pessimo gusto, ne hà altri ancora, che si posson proporre come modello di excellente poesia."

It is no disparagement to Milton to have been indebted to the conceptions of another for the origin of his great undertaking. If Milton borrowed, it was to repay with largeness of interest. The only use that he made of the suggestion was, to stamp upon it the immortality of his own creative genius, and to produce a work which is destined to survive to the latest period of British literature.

For further information on this subject, we refer the reader to the "Inquiry into the origin of Paradise Lost," in Todd's excellent edition of Milton; and in Hayley's Life of Milton will be found Cowper's and Hayley's joint version of the first three *acts of* the Adamo above mentioned.

TO MRS. COURTENAY,† WESTON UNDERWOOD.*

Eartham, Sept. 10, 1792.

My dear Catharina—I am not so uncourteous a knight as to leave your last kind letter, and the last I hope that I shall receive for a long time to come, without an attempt, at least, to acknowledge and to send you something in the shape of an answer to it; but, having been obliged to dose myself last night with laudanum, on account of a little nervous fever, to which I am always subject, and for which I find it the best remedy, I feel myself this morning particularly under the influence of Lethean vapours, and, consequently, in danger of being uncommonly stupid!

You could hardly have sent me intelligence that would have gratified me more than that of my two dear friends, Sir John and Lady Throckmorton, having departed from Paris two days before the terrible 10th of August. I have had many anxious thoughts on their account; and am truly happy to learn that they have sought a more peaceful region, while it was yet permitted them to do so. They will not, I trust, revisit those scenes of tumult and horror while they shall continue to merit that description. We are here all of one mind respecting the cause in which the Parisians are engaged; wish them a free people, and as happy as they can wish

† Now Dowager Lady Throckmorton.
* Private Correspondence.

themselves. But their conduct has not always pleased us: we are shocked at their sanguinary proceedings, and begin to fear, myself in particular, that they will prove themselves unworthy, because incapable of enjoying it, of the inestimable blessing of liberty. My daily toast is, Sobriety and freedom to the French; for they seem as destitute of the former, as they are eager to secure the latter.

We still hold our purpose of leaving Eartham on the seventeenth; and again my fears on Mrs. Unwin's account begin to trouble me; but they are now not quite so reasonable as in the first instance. If she could bear the fatigue of travelling then, she is more equal to it at present; and, supposing that nothing happens to alarm her, which is very probable, may be expected to reach Weston in much better condition than when she left it. Her improvement, however, is chiefly in her looks, and in the articles of speaking and walking; for she can neither rise from her chair without help, nor walk without a support, nor read, nor use her needle. Give my love to the good Doctor, and make him acquainted with the state of his patient, since he, of all men, seems to have the best right to know it.

I am proud that you are pleased with the Epitaph* I sent you, and shall be still prouder to see it perpetuated by the chisel. It is all that I have done since here I came, and all that I have been able to do. I wished, indeed, to have requited Romney, for his well-drawn copy of me, in rhyme; and have

* On Fop, Lady Throckmorton's dog.

more than once or twice attempted it: but I find, like the man in the fable, who could leap only at Rhodes, that verse is almost impossible to me, except at Weston.—Tell my friend George that I am every day mindful of him, and always love him; and bid him by no means to vex himself about the tardiness of Andrews.* Remember me affectionately to William, and to Pitcairn, whom I shall hope to find with you at my return; and, should you see Mr. Buchanan, to him also.—I have now charged you with commissions enow, and having added Mrs. Unwin's best compliments, and told you that I long to see you again, will conclude myself,

My dear Catharina,

Most truly yours,

W. C.

Their departure from Eartham was a scene of affecting interest, and a perfect contrast to the gaiety of their arrival. Anxious to relieve the mind of Hayley from any apprehension for their safety, Cowper addressed to him the following letter from Kingston.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.

The Sun, at Kingston, Sept. 18, 1792.

My dear Brother—With no sinister accident to retard or terrify us, we find ourselves at a quarter

* A stone-mason, who was making a pedestal for an antique bust of Homer.

before one, arrived safe at Kingston. I left you with a heavy heart, and with a heavy heart took leave of our dear Tom,* at the bottom of the chalk-hill. But, soon after this last separation, my troubles gushed from my eyes, and then I was better.

We must now prepare for our visit to the General. I add no more, therefore, than our dearest remembrances and prayers that God may bless you and yours, and reward you an hundred-fold for all your kindness. Tell Tom I shall always hold him dear for his affectionate attentions to Mrs. Unwin. From her heart the memory of him can never be erased. Johnny loves you all, and has his share in all these acknowledgments.

Adieu,

W. C.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.

Weston, Sept. 21, 1792.

My dear Hayley—Chaos himself, even the chaos of Milton, is not surrounded with more confusion, nor has a mind more completely in a hubbub, than I experience at the present moment. At our first arrival, after long absence, we find a hundred orders to servants necessary, a thousand things to be restored to their proper places, and an endless variety of minutiæ to be adjusted; which, though individually of little importance, are most momentous in the aggregate. In these circumstances I find my-

* Hayley's son.

self so indisposed to writing, that, save to yourself, I would on no account attempt it; but to you I will give such a recital as I can of all that has passed since I sent you that short note from Kingston, knowing that, if it be a perplexed recital, you will consider the cause and pardon it. I will begin with a remark in which I am inclined to think you will agree with me, that there is sometimes more true heroism passing in a corner, and on occasions that make no noise in the world, than has often been exercised by those whom that world esteems her greatest heroes, and on occasions the most illustrious. I hope so at least; for all the heroism I have to boast, and all the opportunities I have of displaying any, are of a private nature. After writing the note, I immediately began to prepare for my appointed visit to Ham; but the struggles that I had with my own spirit, labouring as I did under the most dreadful dejection, are never to be told. I would have given the world to have been excused. I went, however, and carried my point against myself, with a heart riven asunder—I have reasons for all this anxiety, which I cannot relate now. The visit, however, passed off well, and we returned in the dark to Kingston; I, with a lighter heart than I had known since my departure from Eartham, and Mary too, for she had suffered hardly less than myself, and chiefly on my account. That night we rested well in our inn, and at twenty minutes after eight next morning set off for London; exactly at ten we reached Mr. Rose's door; we drank a dish of chocolate with him, and proceeded, Mr. Rose

riding with us as far as St. Albans. From this time we met with no impediment. In the dark, and in a storm, at eight at night, we found ourselves at our own back-door. Mrs. Unwin was very near slipping out of the chair in which she was taken from the chaise, but at last was landed safe. We all have had a good night, and are all well this morning.

God bless you, my dearest Brother,

W. C

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.

Weston, Oct. 2, 1792.

My dear Hayley—A bad night, succeeded by an East wind, and a sky all in sables, have such an effect on my spirits, that, if I did not consult my own comfort more than yours, I should not write to-day, for I shall not entertain you much: yet your letter, though containing no very pleasant tidings, has afforded me some relief. It tells me, indeed, that you have been dispirited yourself, and that poor little Tom, the faithful 'squire of my Mary, has been seriously indisposed: all this grieves me, but then there is a warmth of heart and a kindness in it that do me good. I will endeavour not to repay you in notes of sorrow and despondence, though all my sprightly chords seem broken. In truth, one day excepted, I have not seen the day when I have been cheerful since I left you. My spirits, I think, are almost constantly lower than they were;

the approach of winter is perhaps the cause, and if it is, I have nothing better to expect for a long time to come.

Yesterday was a day of assignation with myself, the day of which I said some days before it came, when that day comes I will begin my dissertations. Accordingly when it came I prepared to do so; filled a letter-case with fresh paper, furnished myself with a pretty good pen, and replenished my ink-bottle; but, partly from one cause, and partly from another, chiefly, however, from distress and dejection, after writing and obliterating about six lines, in the composition of which I spent near an hour, I was obliged to relinquish the attempt. An attempt so unsuccessful could have no other effect than to dishearten me, and it has had that effect to such a degree, that I know not when I shall find courage to make another. At present I shall certainly abstain, since at present I cannot well afford to expose myself to the danger of a fresh mortification.

W. C.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.

Weston, Oct. 13, 1792.

I began a letter to you yesterday, my dearest brother, and proceeded through two sides of the sheet, but so much of my nervous fever found its way into it, that, looking it over this morning, I determined not to send it.

I have risen, though not in good spirits, yet in

better than I generally do of late, and therefore will not address you in the melancholy tone that belongs to my worst feelings.

I began to be restless about your portrait, and to say, how long shall I have to wait for it? I wished it here for many reasons: the sight of it will be a comfort to me, for I not only love but am proud of you, as of a conquest made in my old age. Johnny goes to town on Monday, on purpose to call on Romney, to whom he shall give all proper information concerning its conveyance hither. The name of a man, whom I esteem as I do Romney, ought not to be unmusical in my ears, but his name will be so till I shall have paid him a debt justly due to him, by doing such poetical honours to it as I intend. Heaven knows when that intention will be executed, for the muse is still as obdurate and as coy as ever.

Your kind postscript is just arrived, and gives me great pleasure; when I cannot see you myself, it seems some comfort, however, that you have been seen by another known to me; and who will tell me in a few days that he has seen you. Your wishes to disperse my melancholy would, I am sure, prevail, did that event depend on the warmth and sincerity with which you frame them; but it has baffled both wishes and prayers, and those the most fervent that could be made, so many years, that the case seems hopeless. But no more of this at present'

Your verses to Austen are as sweet as the honey that they accompany; kind, friendly, witty, and

elegant! when shall I be able to do the like? Perhaps when my Mary, like your Tom, shall cease to be an invalid, I may recover a power, at least, to do something. I sincerely rejoice in the dear little man's restoration. My Mary continues, I hope, to mend a little.

W. C.

TO MRS. KING.*

Oct. 14, 1792.

My dear Madam—Your kind inquiries after mine and Mrs. Unwin's health will not permit me to be silent; though I am and have long been so indisposed to writing, that even a letter has almost overtasked me.

Your last but one found me on the point of setting out for Sussex, whither I went with Mrs. Unwin, on a visit to my friend, Mr. Hayley. We spent six weeks at Eartham, and returned on the nineteenth of September. I had hopes that change of air and change of scene might be serviceable both to my poor invalid and me. She, I hope, has received some benefit; and I am not the worse for it myself; but, at the same time, must acknowledge that I cannot boast of much amendment. The time we spent there could not fail to pass as agreeably as her weakness, and my spirits, at a low ebb, would permit. Hayley is one of the most agreeable men, as well as one of the most cordial friends.

* Private Correspondence.

His house is elegant; his library large, and well chosen; and he is surrounded by the most delightful scenery. But I have made the experiment only to prove, what indeed I knew before, that creatures are physicians of little value, and that health and cure are from God only. Henceforth, therefore, I shall wait for those blessings from Him, and expect them at no other hand. In the mean time, I have the comfort to be able to tell you that Mrs. Unwin, on the whole, is restored beyond the most sanguine expectations I had when I wrote last; and that, as to myself, it is not much otherwise with me than it has been these twenty years; except that this season of the year is always unfavourable to my spirits.

I rejoice that you have had the pleasure of another interview with Mr. Martyn; and am glad that the trifles I have sent you afforded him any amusement. This letter has already given you to understand that I am at present no artificer of verse; and that, consequently, I have nothing new to communicate. When I have, I shall do it to none more readily than to yourself.

My dear Madam,
Very affectionately yours,
W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Oct. 18, 1792.

My dear Friend—I thought that the wonder had been all on my side, having been employed in won-

* Private Correspondence.

dering at your silence, as long as you at mine. Soon after our arrival at Eartham, I received a letter from you, which I answered, if not by the return of the post, at least in a day or two. Not that I should have insisted on the ceremonial of letter for letter, during so long a period, could I have found leisure to double your debt; but while there, I had no opportunity for writing, except now and then a short one; for we breakfasted early, studied Milton as soon as breakfast was over, and continued in that employment till Mrs. Unwin came forth from her chamber, to whom all the rest of my time was necessarily devoted. Our return to Weston was on the nineteenth of last month, according to your information. You will naturally think that, in the interval, I must have had sufficient leisure to give you notice of our safe arrival. But the fact has been otherwise. I have neither been well myself, nor is Mrs. Unwin, though better, so much improved in her health, as not still to require my continual assistance. My disorder has been the old one, to which I have been subject so many years, and especially about this season—a nervous fever; not, indeed, so oppressive as it has sometimes proved, but sufficiently alarming both to Mrs. Unwin and myself, and such as made it neither easy nor proper for me to make much use of my pen, while it continued. At present I am tolerably free from it; a blessing for which I believe myself partly indebted to the use of James's powder, in small quantities; and partly to a small quantity of laudanum, taken every night; but chiefly to a mani-

festation of God's presence vouchsafed to me a few days since; transient, indeed, and dimly seen through a mist of many fears and troubles, but sufficient to convince me, at least while the Enemy's power is a little restrained, that He has not cast me off for ever.

Our visit was a pleasant one; as pleasant as Mrs. Unwin's weakness, and the state of my spirits, never very good, would allow. As to my own health, I never expected that it would be much improved by the journey; nor have I found it so. Some benefit, indeed, I hoped; and, perhaps, a little more than I found. But the season was, after the first fortnight, extremely unfavourable, stormy and wet; and the prospects, though grand and magnificent, yet rather of a melancholy cast, and consequently not very propitious to me. The cultivated appearance of Weston suits my frame of mind far better than wild hills that aspire to be mountains, covered with vast unfrequented woods, and here and there affording a peep between their summits at the distant ocean. Within doors all was hospitality and kindness, but the scenery *would* have its effect; and, though delightful in the extreme to those who had spirits to bear it, was too gloomy for me.

Yours, my dear friend,

Most sincerely,

W. C.

TO JOHN JOHNSON, ESQ.

Weston, Oct. 19, 1792.

My dearest Johnny—You are too useful when you are here not to be missed on a hundred occasions daily; and too much domesticated with us not to be regretted always. I hope, therefore, that your month or six weeks will not be like many that I have known, capable of being drawn out into any length whatever, and productive of nothing but disappointment.

I have done nothing since you went, except that I have composed the better half of a sonnet to Romney; yet even this ought to bear an earlier date, for I began to be haunted with a desire to do it long before we came out of Sussex, and have daily attempted it ever since.

It would be well for the reading part of the world, if the writing part were, many of them, as dull as I am. Yet even this small produce, which my sterile intellect has hardly yielded at last, may serve to convince you that in point of spirits I am not worse.

In fact, I am a little better. The powders and the laudanum together have, for the present at least, abated the fever that consumes them; and in measure as the fever abates, I acquire a less discouraging view of things, and with it a little power to exert myself.

In the evenings I read Baker's Chronicle to Mrs. Unwin, having no other history, and hope in time

to be as well versed in it, as his admirer Sir Roger de Coverley.

W. C.

TO JOHN JOHNSON, ESQ.

Weston, Oct. 22, 1792.

My dear Johnny—Here am I, with I know not how many letters to answer, and no time to do it in. I exhort you, therefore, to set a proper value on this, as proving your priority in my attentions, though in other respects likely to be of little value.

You do well to sit for your picture, and give very sufficient reasons for doing it; you will also, I doubt not, take care that, when future generations shall look at it, some spectator or other shall say, this is the picture of a good man and a useful one.

And now God bless you, my dear Johnny. I proceed much after the old rate; rising cheerless and distressed in the morning, and brightening a little as the day goes on.

Adieu,

W. C.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.

Weston, Oct. 28, 1792.

Nothing done, my dearest brother, nor likely to be done at present; yet I purpose in a day or two to make another attempt, to which, however, I shall address myself with fear and trembling, like a

man, who, having sprained his wrist, dreads to use it. I have not, indeed, like such a man, injured myself by any extraordinary exertion, but seem as much enfeebled as if I had. The consciousness that there is so much to do, and nothing done, is a burthen I am not able to bear. Milton especially is my grievance, and I might almost as well be haunted by his ghost as goaded with continual reproaches for neglecting him. I will therefore begin; I will do my best; and if, after all, that best prove good for nothing, I will even send the notes, worthless as they are, that I have made already; a measure very disagreeable to myself, and to which nothing but necessity shall compel me. I shall rejoice to see those new samples of your biography,* which you give me to expect.

Allons! Courage!—Here comes something however; produced after a gestation as long as that of a pregnant woman. It is the debt long unpaid, the compliment due to Romney; and if it has your approbation, I will send it, or you may send it for me. I must premise, however, that I intended nothing less than a sonnet when I began. I know not why, but I said to myself, it shall not be a sonnet; accordingly I attempted it in one sort of measure, then in a second, then in a third, till I had made the trial in half a dozen different kinds of shorter verse, and behold it is a sonnet at last. The fates would have it so.

* Hayley's Life of Milton.

TO GEORGE ROMNEY, ESQ.

Romney! expert infallibly to trace,
On chart or canvas, not the form alone,
And semblance, but, however faintly shown,
The mind's impression too on every face,
With strokes, that time ought never to erase:
Thou hast so pencill'd mine, that, though I own
The subject worthless, I have never known
The artist shining with superior grace.

But this I mark, that symptoms none of woe
In thy incomparable work appear:
Well! I am satisfied, it should be so,
Since, on maturer thought, the cause is clear;

For in my looks what sorrow could'st thou see,
While I was Hayley's guest, and sat to thee?

W. C.

TO JOHN JOHNSON, ESQ.*

Nov. 5, 1792.

My dearest Johnny—I have done nothing since you went, except that I have finished the Sonnet which I told you I had begun, and sent it to Hayley, who is well pleased *therewith*, and has by this time transmitted it to whom it most concerns.

I would not give the algebraist sixpence for his encomiums on my Task, if he condemns my Homer, which, I know, in point of language, is equal to it, and in variety of numbers superior. But the character of the former having been some years

* Private Correspondence.

established, he follows the general cry; and should Homer establish himself as well, and I trust he will hereafter, I shall have his warm suffrage for that also. But if not—it is no matter. Swift says somewhere,—There are a few good judges of poetry in the world, who lend their taste to those who have none: and your man of figures is probably one of the borrowers.

Adieu—in great haste. Our united love attends yourself and yours, whose I am most truly and affectionately.

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

Weston, Nov. 9, 1792.

My dear Friend—I wish that I were as industrious and as much occupied as you, though in a different way; but it is not so with me. Mrs. Unwin's great debility (who is not yet able to move without assistance) is of itself a hindrance such as would effectually disable me. Till she can work, and read, and fill up her time as usual (all which is at present entirely out of her power) I may now and then find time to write a letter, but I shall write nothing more. I cannot sit with my pen in my hand and my books before me, while she is in effect in solitude, silent, and looking at the fire. To this hindrance that other has been added, of which you are already aware, a want of spirits, such as I have never known, when I was not ab-

solutely laid by, since I commenced an author. How long I shall be continued in these uncomfortable circumstances is known only to Him, who, as he will, disposes of us all. I may be yet able, perhaps, to prepare the first book of the Paradise Lost for the press, before it will be wanted; and Johnson himself seems to think there will be no haste for the second. But poetry is my favourite employment, and all my poetical operations are in the mean time suspended; for, while a work to which I have bound myself remains unaccomplished, I can do nothing else.

Johnson's plan of prefixing my phiz to the new edition of my poems is by no means a pleasant one to me, and so I told him in a letter I sent him from Eartham, in which I assured him that my objections to it would not be easily surmounted. But if you judge that it may really have an effect in advancing the sale, I would not be so squeamish as to suffer the spirit of prudery to prevail in me to his disadvantage. Somebody told an author, I forget whom, that there was more vanity in refusing his picture than in granting it, on which he instantly complied. I do not perfectly feel all the force of the argument, but it shall content me that he did.

I do most sincerely rejoice in the success of your publication,* and have no doubt that my prophecy concerning your success in greater matters will be fulfilled. We are naturally pleased when our friends approve what we approve ourselves; how

* Decisions of the English Courts.

much then must I be pleased, when you speak so kindly of Johnny! I know him to be all that you think him, and love him entirely.

Adieu! We expect you at Christmas, and shall therefore rejoice when Christmas comes. Let nothing interfere.

Ever yours,
W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Nov. 11, 1792.

My dear Friend—I am not so insensible of your kindness in making me an exception from the number of your correspondents, to whom you forbid the hope of hearing from you till your present labours are ended, as to make you wait longer for an answer to your last; which, indeed, would have had its answer before this time, had it been possible for me to write. But so many have demands upon me of a similar kind, and, while Mrs. Unwin continues an invalid, my opportunities of writing are so few, that I am constrained to incur a long arrear to some, with whom I would wish to be punctual. She can at present neither work nor read; and, till she can do both, and amuse herself as usual, my own amusements of the pen must be suspended.

I, like you, have a work before me, and a work to which I should be glad to address myself in earnest, but cannot do it at present. When the

* Private Correspondence.

opportunity comes, I shall, like you, be under a necessity of interdicting some of my usual correspondents, and of shortening my letters to the excepted few. Many letters and much company are incompatible with authorship, and the one as much as the other. It will be long, I hope, before the world is put in possession of a publication, which you design should be posthumous.

Oh for the day when your expectations of my complete deliverance shall be verified! At present it seems very remote: so distant, indeed, that hardly the faintest streak of it is visible in my horizon. The glimpse, with which I was favoured about a month since, has never been repeated; and the depression of my spirits has. The future appears gloomy as ever; and I seem to myself to be scrambling always in the dark, among rocks and precipices, without a guide, but with an enemy ever at my heels, prepared to push me headlong. Thus I have spent twenty years, but thus I shall not spend twenty years more. Long ere that period arrives, the grand question concerning my everlasting weal or woe will be decided.

Adieu, my dear friend. I have exhausted my time, though not filled my paper.

Truly yours, W. C.

TO JOHN JOHNSON, ESQ.

Weston, Nov. 20, 1792.

My dearest Johnny—I give you many thanks for your rhymes, and your verses without rhyme; for

your poetical dialogue between wood and stone: between Homer's head, and the head of Samuel; kindly intended, I know well, for my amusement, and that amused me much.

The successor of the clerk defunct, for whom I used to write, arrived here this morning, with a recommendatory letter from Joe Rye, and an humble petition of his own, entreating me to assist him as I had assisted his predecessor. I have undertaken the service, although with no little reluctance, being involved in many arrears on other subjects, and having very little dependence at present on my ability to write at all. I proceed exactly as when you were here—a letter now and then before breakfast, and the rest of my time all holiday; if holiday it may be called, that is spent chiefly in moping and musing, and "*forecasting the fashion of uncertain evils.*"

The fever on my spirits has harassed me much, and I have never had so good a night, nor so quiet a rising, since you went, as on this very morning; a relief that I account particularly seasonable and propitious, because I had, in my intentions, devoted this morning to you, and could not have fulfilled those intentions, had I been as spiritless as I generally am.

I am glad that Johnson is in no haste for Milton, for I seem myself not likely to address myself presently to that concern, with any prospect of success; yet something now and then, like a secret whisper, assures and encourages me that it will yet be done.

W. C.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY ESQ.

Weston, Nov. 25, 1792.

How shall I thank you enough for the interest you take in my future Miltonic labours, and the assistance you promise me in the performance of them; I will some time or other, if I live, and live a poet, acknowledge your friendship in some of my best verse; the most suitable return one poet can make to another: in the mean time, I love you, and am sensible of all your kindness. You wish me warm in my work, and I ardently wish the same: but when I shall be so God only knows. My melancholy, which seemed a little alleviated for a few days, has gathered about me again with as black a cloud as ever; the consequence is absolute incapacity to begin.

I was for some years dirge-writer to the town of Northampton, being employed by the clerk of the principal parish there to furnish him with an annual copy of verses proper to be printed at the foot of his bill of mortality; but the clerk died, and, hearing nothing for two years from his successor, I well hoped that I was out of my office. The other morning however Sam announced the new clerk; he came to solicit the same service as I had rendered his predecessor, and I reluctantly complied; doubtful, indeed, whether I was capable. I have however achieved that labour, and I have done nothing more. I am just sent for up to Mary, dear Mary! Adieu! she is as well as when I left you,

I would I could say better. Remember us both affectionately to your sweet boy, and trust me for being

Most truly yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

Dec. 9, 1792.

My dear Friend—You need not be uneasy on the subject of Milton. I shall not find that labour too heavy for me, if I have health and leisure. The season of the year is unfavourable to me respecting the former; and Mrs. Unwin's present weakness allows me less of the latter than the occasion seems to call for. But the business is in no haste. The artists employed to furnish the embellishments are not likely to be very expeditious; and a small portion only of the work will be wanted from me at once; for the intention is to deal it out to the public piece-meal. I am, therefore, under no great anxiety on that account. It is not, indeed, an employment that I should have chosen for myself; because poetry pleases and amuses me more, and would cost me less labour, properly so called. All this I felt before I engaged with Johnson; and did, in the first instance, actually decline the service; but he was urgent; and, at last, I suffered myself to be persuaded.

The season of the year, as I have already said,

* Private Correspondence.

is particularly adverse to me: yet not in itself, perhaps, more adverse than any other; but the approach of it always reminds me of the same season in the dreadful seventy-three, and in the more dreadful eighty-six. I cannot help terrifying myself with doleful misgivings and apprehensions; nor is the enemy negligent to seize all the advantage that the occasion gives him. Thus, hearing much from him, and having little or no sensible support from God, I suffer inexpressible things till January is over. And even then, whether increasing years have made me more liable to it, or despair, the longer it lasts, grows naturally darker, I find myself more inclined to melancholy than I was a few years since. God only knows where this will end; but where it is likely to end, unless he interpose powerfully in my favour, all may know.

I remain, my dear friend,
Most sincerely yours,
W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

Weston, Dec. 16, 1792.

My dear Sir—We differ so little, that it is pity we should not agree. The possibility of restoring our diseased government is, I think, the only point on which we are not of one mind. If you are right, and it cannot be touched in the medical way, without danger of absolute ruin to the constitution, keep the doctors at a distance say I—and let us

live as long as we can. But perhaps physicians might be found of skill sufficient for the purpose, were they but as willing as able. Who are they? Not those honest blunderers, the mob, but our governors themselves. As it is in the power of any individual to be honest if he will, any body of men are, as it seems to me, equally possessed of the same option. For I can never persuade myself to think the world so constituted by the Author of it, and human society, which is his ordinance, so shabby a business, that the buying and selling of votes and consciences should be essential to its existence. As to multiplied representation I know not that I foresee any great advantage likely to arise from that. Provided there be but a reasonable number of reasonable heads laid together for the good of the nation, the end may as well be answered by five hundred as it would be by a thousand, and perhaps better. But then they should be honest as well as wise, and, in order that they may be so, they should put it out of their own power to be otherwise. This they might certainly do if they would; and, would they do it, I am not convinced that any great mischief would ensue. You say, "somebody must have influence," but I see no necessity for it. Let integrity of intention and a due share of ability be supposed, and the influence will be in the right place; it will all centre in the zeal and good of the nation. That will influence their debates and decisions, and nothing else ought to do it. You will say, perhaps, that wise men, and honest men, as they are supposed, they are yet

liable to be split into almost as many differences of opinion as there are individuals; but I rather think not. It is observed of Prince Eugene and the Duke of Marlborough, that each always approved and seconded the plans and views of the other; and the reason given for it is that they were men of equal ability. The same cause that could make two unanimous would make twenty so, and would at least secure a majority among as many hundreds.

As to the reformation of the church, I want none, unless by a better provision for the inferior clergy; and, if that could be brought about by emaciating a little some of our too corpulent dignitaries, I should be well contented.

The dissenters, I think, Catholics and others, have all a right to the privileges of all other Englishmen, because to deprive them is persecution, and persecution on any account, but especially on a religious one, is an abomination. But after all, *valeat respublica.* I love my country, I love my king, and I wish peace and prosperity to Old England.*

Adieu,

W. C.

* The question of a Reform in Parliament was at this time beginning to engage the public attention, and Mr. Grey (now Earl Grey) had recently announced his intention in the House of Commons of bringing forward that important subject in the ensuing session of Parliament. It was accordingly submitted to the House, May 6th, 1793, when Mr. Grey delivered his sentiments at considerable length, embodying many of the topics now so familiar to the public, but by no means pursuing the principle to the extent since adopted.

TO THOMAS PARK, ESQ.

Weston Underwood, Dec. 17, 1792.

My dear Sir—You are very kind in thinking it worth while to inquire after so irregular a correspondent. When I had read your last, I persuaded myself that I had answered your obliging letter received while I was at Eartham, and seemed clearly to remember it; but, upon better recollection, am inclined to think myself mistaken, and that I have many pardons to ask for neglecting to do it so long.

While I was at Mr. Hayley's I could hardly find opportunity to write to any body. He is an early riser and breakfasts early, and unless I could rise early enough myself to dispatch a letter before breakfast, I had no leisure to do it at all. For immediately after breakfast we repaired to the library, where we studied in concert till noon; and the rest of my time was so occupied by necessary attention to my poor invalid, Mrs. Unwin, and by

The debate lasted till two o'clock in the morning, when it was adjourned to the following day. After a renewed discussion, which continued till four in the morning, the House divided, when the numbers were as follows, viz. Ayes 40, Noes 282.

It is interesting to mark this first commencement of the popular question of Reform (if we except Mr. Pitt's measure, in 1782) and to contrast its slow progress with the final issue, under the same leader, in the year 1832. The minority for several successive years seldom exceeded the amount above specified, though the measure was at length carried by so large a majority.

various other engagements, that to write was impossible.

Since my return, I have been almost constantly afflicted with weak and inflamed eyes, and indeed have wanted spirits as well as leisure. If you can, therefore, you must pardon me; and you will do it perhaps the rather, when I assure you that not you alone, but every person and every thing that had demands upon me has been equally neglected. A strange weariness that has long had dominion over me has indisposed and indeed disqualified me for all employment;* and my hindrances besides have been such that I am sadly in arrear in all quarters. A thousand times I have been sorry and ashamed that your MSS. are yet unrevised, and if you knew the compunction that it has cost me, you would pity me: for I feel as if I were guilty in that particular, though my conscience tells me that it could not be otherwise.

Before I received your letter written from Margate, I had formed a resolution never to be engraven, and was confirmed in it by my friend Hayley's example. But, learnin since, though I have not learned it from himself, that my bookseller has an intention to prefix a copy of Abbott's picture of me to the next edition of my poems, at his own expense, if I can be prevailed upon to consent to it; in consideration of the liberality of his

* This expression alludes to the nervous fever and great depression of spirits that Cowper laboured under, in the months of October and November, and which has been frequently mentioned in the preceding correspondence.

behaviour, I have felt my determination shaken. This intelligence, however, comes to me from a third person, and till it reaches me in a direct line from Johnson, I can say nothing to *him* about it. When he shall open to me his intentions himself, I will not be backward to mention to him your obliging offer, and shall be particularly gratified, if I must be engraved at last, to have that service performed for me by a friend.

I thank you for the anecdote, which could not fail to be very pleasant,* and remain, my dear Sir,

With gratitude and affection,

Yours,

W. C.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.

Weston, Dec. 26, 1792.

That I may not be silent, till my silence alarms you, I snatch a moment to tell you, that although *toujours triste* I am not worse than usual, but my opportunities of writing are *paucified*, as perhaps Dr. Johnson would have dared to say, and the few that I have are shortened by company.

Give my love to dear Tom, and thank him for

* The Hon. Mrs. Boscawen had expressed her regret that Cowper should employ his time and talents in translation, instead of original composition; accompanied by a wish that he would produce another 'Task,' adverting to what Pope had made his friend exclaim,

"Do write next winter more 'Essays on Man.'"

his very apposite extract, which I should be nappy indeed to turn to any account. How often do I wish in the course of every day, that I could be employed once more in poetry, and how often of course that this Miltonic trap had never caught me! The year ninety-two shall stand chronicled in my remembrance as the most melancholy that I have ever known, except the few weeks that I spent at Eartham; and such it has been principally because, being engaged to Milton, I felt myself no longer free for any other engagement. That ill-fated work, impracticable in itself, has made every thing else impracticable.

. . . . . I am very Pindaric, and obliged to be so by the hurry of the hour. My friends are come down to breakfast.

Adieu!

W. C.

TO THOMAS PARK, ESQ.

Weston Underwood, Jan. 3, 1793.

My dear Sir—A few lines must serve to introduce to you my much-valued friend Mr. Rose, and to thank you for your very obliging attention in sending me so approved a remedy for my disorder. It is no fault of yours, but it will be a disappointment to you to know, that I have long been in possession of that remedy, and have tried it without effect, or, to speak more truly, with an unfavourable one. Judging by the pain it causes, I conclude

that it is of the caustic kind, and may therefore be sovereign in cases where the eye-lids are ulcerated; but mine is a dry inflammation, which it has always increased as often as I have used it. I used it again, after having long since resolved to use it no more, that I might not seem, even to myself, to slight your kindness, but with no better effect than in every former instance.

You are very candid in crediting so readily the excuse I make for not having yet revised your MSS. and as kind in allowing me still longer time. I refer you for a more particular account of the circumstances that make all literary pursuits at present impracticable to me, to the young gentleman who delivers this into your hands.* He is perfectly master of the subject, having just left me after having spent a fortnight with us.

You asked me a long time since a question concerning the Olney Hymns, which I do not remember that I have ever answered. Those marked C. are mine, one excepted, which, though it bears that mark, was written by Mr. Newton. I have not the collection at present, and therefore cannot tell you which it is.

You must extend your charity still a little farther, and excuse a short answer to your two obliging letters. I do every thing with my pen in a hurry, but will not conclude without entreating you to make my thanks and best compliments to the lady †

* Mr. Rose.

† Mrs. Haden, formerly governess to the daughters of Lord Eardley.

who was so good as to trouble herself for my sake to write a character of the medicine. I remain,

My dear Sir,

Sincerely yours,

W. C.

Your request does me honour. Johnson will have orders in a few days to send a copy of the edition just published.*

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.

Weston, Jan. 20, 1793.

My dear Brother—Now I know that you are safe, I treat you, as you see, with a philosophical indifference, not acknowledging your kind and immediate answer to anxious inquiries, till it suits my own convenience. I have learned, however, from my late solicitude, that not only you, but yours, interest me to a degree, that, should any thing happen to either of you, would be very inconsistent with my peace. Sometimes I thought that you were extremely ill, and once or twice that you were dead. As often some tragedy reached my ear concerning little Tom. "Oh, *vanæ mentes hominum!*" How liable are we to a thousand impositions, and how indebted to honest old Time, who never fails to undeceive us! Whatever you had in prospect, you acted kindly by me not to make me partaker of your expectations; for I have a spirit, if not so

* The fifth edition of Cowper's Poems.

sanguine as yours, yet that would have waited for your coming with anxious impatience, and have been dismally mortified by the disappointment. Had you come, and come without notice too, you would not have surprised us more, than (as the matter was managed) we were surprised at the arrival of your picture. It reached us in the evening, after the shutters were closed, at a time when a chaise might actually have brought you without giving us the least previous intimation. Then it was, that Samuel, with his cheerful countenance, appeared at the study door, and with a voice as cheerful as his looks, exclaimed, "Mr. Hayley is come, Madam!" We both started, and in the same moment cried, "Mr. Hayley come! And where is he?" The next moment corrected our mistake, and, finding Mary's voice grow suddenly tremulous, I turned and saw her weeping.

I do nothing, notwithstanding all your exhortations: my idleness is proof against them all, or to speak more truly, my difficulties are so. Something indeed I do. I play at push-pin with Homer every morning before breakfast, fingering and polishing, as Paris did his armour. I have lately had a letter from Dublin on that subject, which has pleased me. W. C.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.

Weston, Jan. 29, 1793.

My dearest Hayley—I truly sympathize with you under your weight of sorrow for the loss of our

good Samaritan.* But be not broken-hearted, my friend! Remember the loss of those we love is the condition on which we live ourselves; and that he who chooses his friends wisely from among the excellent of the earth, has a sure ground to hope concerning them when they die, that a merciful God has made them far happier than they could be here, and that we shall join them soon again. This is solid comfort, could we but avail ourselves of it; but I confess the difficulty of doing so. Sorrow is like the deaf adder, "that hears not the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely;" and I feel so much myself for the death of Austen, that my own chief consolation is, that I had never seen him. Live yourself, I beseech you, for I have seen so much of you that I can by no means spare you, and I will live as long as it shall please God to permit. I know you set some value on me, therefore let that promise comfort you, and give us not reason to say, like David's servant—"We know that it would have pleased thee more if all we had died, than this one, for whom thou art inconsolable." You have still Romney, and Carwardine, and Guy, and me, my poor Mary, and I know not how many beside; as many, I suppose, as ever had an opportunity of spending a day with you. He who has the most friends must necessarily lose the most, and he whose friends are numerous as yours may the better spare a part of them. It is a changing, transient

* Dr. Austen, who is here alluded to, was not less distinguished for his humane and benevolent qualties, than for his professional skill and eminence.

scene: yet a little while, and this poor dream of life will be over with all of us. The living, and they who live unhappy, they are indeed subjects of sorrow.

Adieu! my beloved friend,

Ever yours,

W. C.

TO JOHN JOHNSON, ESQ.*

Jan. 31, 1793.

Io Pæan!

My dearest Johnny—Even as you foretold, so it came to pass. On Tuesday I received your letter, and on Tuesday came the pheasants; for which I am indebted in many thanks, as well as Mrs. Unwin, both to your kindness and to your kind friend Mr. Copeman.

> In Copeman's ear this truth let Echo tell,—
> "Immortal bards like mortal pheasants well:"
> And when his clerkship's out, I wish him herds
> Of golden clients for his golden birds.

Our friends the Courtenays have never dined with us since their marriage, *because* we have never asked them; and we have never asked them, *because* poor Mrs. Unwin is not so equal to the task of providing for and entertaining company as before this last illness. But this is no objection to the arrival here of a bustard; rather it is a cause for which we shall be particularly glad to see the monster.

* Private Correspondence.

It will be a handsome present to *them*. So let the bustard come, as the Lord Mayor of London said of the hare, when he was hunting—let her come, a' God's name: I am not afraid of her.

Adieu, my dear cousin and caterer. My eyes are terribly bad; else, I had much more to say to you.

Ever affectionately yours,

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

Weston, Feb. 5, 1793.

In this last revisal of my work (the Homer) I have made a number of small improvements, and am now more convinced than ever, having exercised a cooler judgment upon it than before I could, that the translation will make its way. There must be time for the conquest of vehement and long-rooted prejudice; but, without much self-partiality, I believe, that the conquest will be made; and am certain that I should be of the same opinion, were the work another man's. I shall soon have finished the Odyssey, and when I have, will send the corrected copy of both to Johnson.

Adieu!

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Weston, Feb. 10, 1793.

My pens are all split, and my ink-glass is dry;
Neither wit, common-sense, nor ideas have I.

In vain has it been, that I have made several attempts to write, since I came from Sussex; unless more comfortable days arrive than I have confidence to look for, there is an end of all writing with me. I have no spirits:—when Rose came, I was obliged to prepare for his coming by a nightly dose of laudanum—twelve drops suffice; but without them, I am devoured by melancholy.

A-propos of the Rose! His wife in her political notions is the exact counterpart of yourself—loyal in the extreme. Therefore, if you find her thus inclined, when you become acquainted with her, you must not place her resemblance of yourself to the account of her admiration of you, for she is your likeness ready made. In fact, we are all of one mind about government matters, and notwithstanding your opinion, the Rose is himself a Whig, and I am a Whig, and you, my dear, are a Tory, and all the Tories now-a-days call all the Whigs republicans. How the deuce you came to be a Tory is best known to yourself: you have to answer for this novelty to the shades of your ancestors, who were always Whigs ever since we had any.

Adieu.

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

Weston, Feb. 17, 1793.

My dear Friend—I have read the critique of my work in the *Analytical Review*, and am happy to have fallen into the hands of a critic, rigorous enough indeed, but a scholar, and a man of sense, and who does not deliberately intend me mischief. I am better pleased indeed that he censures some things than I should have been with unmixt commendation, for his censure (to use the new diplomatic term) will accredit his praises. In his particular remarks he is for the most part right, and I shall be the better for them; but in his general ones I think he asserts too largely, and more than he could prove. With respect to inversions in particular, I know that they do not abound. Once they did, and I had Milton's example for it, not disapproved by Addison. But on ———'s remonstrance against them, I expunged the most, and in my new edition shall have fewer still. I know that they give dignity, and am sorry to part with them; but, to parody an old proverb, he who lives in the year ninety-three, must do as in the year ninety-three is done by others. The same remark I have to make on his censure of inharmonious lines. I know them to be much fewer than he asserts, and not more in number than I accounted indispensably necessary to a due variation of cadence. I have, however, now, in conformity with modern taste, (over much delicate in my mind,) given to a far

greater number of them a flow as smooth as oil. A few I retain, and will, in compliment to my own judgment. He thinks me too faithful to compound epithets in the introductory lines, and I know his reason. He fears lest the English reader should blame Homer, whom he idolizes, though hardly more than I, for such constant repetition. But them I shall not alter. They are necessary to a just representation of the original. In the affair of Outis,* I shall throw him flat on his back by an unanswerable argument, which I shall give in a note, and with which I am furnished by Mrs. Unwin. So much for hypercriticism, which has run away with all my paper. This critic, by the way, is ——;† I know him by infallible indications.

W. C.

TO THE REV. MR. HURDIS.

Weston, Feb. 22, 1793.

My dear Sir—My eyes, which have long been inflamed, will hardly serve for Homer, and oblige me to make all my letters short. You have obliged me much, by sending me so speedily the remainder of your notes. I have begun with them again, and find them, as before, very much to the purpose. More to the purpose they could not have been, had you been poetry professor already. I rejoice sincerely in the prospect you have of that office, which, whatever may be your own thoughts of the matter,

* A name given to Ulysses. † Maty.

I am sure you will fill with great sufficiency. Would that my interest and power to serve you were greater! One string to my bow I have, and one only, which shall not be idle for want of my exertions. I thank you likewise for your very entertaining notices and remarks in the natural way. The hurry in which I write would not suffer me to send you many in return, had I many to send, but only two or three present themselves.

Frogs will feed on worms. I saw a frog gathering into his gullet an earth-worm as long as himself; it cost him time and labour, but at last he succeeded.

Mrs. Unwin and I, crossing a brook, saw from the foot-bridge somewhat at the bottom of the water which had the appearance of a flower. Observing it attentively, we found that it consisted of a circular assemblage of minnows; their heads all met in a centre, and their tails, diverging at equal distances, and being elevated above their heads, gave them the appearance of a flower half blown. One was longer than the rest, and as often as a straggler came in sight, he quitted his place to pursue him, and having driven him away, he returned to it again, no other minnow offering to take it in his absence. This we saw him do several times. The object that had attached them all was a dead minnow, which they seemed to be devouring.

After a very rainy day, I saw on one of the flower borders what seemed a long hair, but it had a waving, twining motion. Considering more nearly, I found it alive, and endued with spontaneity, but

could not discover at the ends of it either head or tail, or any distinction of parts. I carried it into the house, when the air of a warm room dried and killed it presently.

W. C.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.

Weston, Feb. 24, 1793.

Your letter (so full of kindness, and so exactly in unison with my own feelings for you) should have had, as it deserved to have, an earlier answer, had I not been perpetually tormented with inflamed eyes, which are a sad hindrance to me in every thing. But, to make amends, if I do not send you an early answer, I send you at least a speedy one, being obliged to write as fast as my pen can trot, that I may shorten the time of poring upon paper as much as possible. Homer too has been another hindrance, for always when I can see, which is only about two hours every morning, and not at all by candle-light, I devote myself to him, being in haste to send him a second time to the press, that nothing may stand in the way of Milton. By the way, where are my dear Tom's remarks, which I long to have, and must have soon, or they will come too late?

Oh, you rogue! what would you give to have such a dream about Milton as I had about a week since? I dreamed that, being in a house in the city, and with much company, looking towards the lower end of the room from the upper end of it, I de-

scried a figure which I immediately knew to be Milton's. He was very gravely but very neatly attired in the fashion of his day, and had a countenance, which filled me with those feelings that an affectionate child has for a beloved father, such, for instance, as Tom has for you. My first thought was wonder, where he could have been concealed so many years; my second, a transport of joy to find him still alive; my third, another transport to find myself in his company; and my fourth, a resolution to accost him: I did so, and he received me with a complacence, in which I saw equal sweetness and dignity. I spoke of his Paradise Lost, as every man must, who is worthy to speak of it at all, and told him a long story of the manner in which it affected me when I first discovered it, being at that time a school-boy. He answered me by a smile, and a gentle inclination of his head. He then grasped my hand affectionately, and with a smile that charmed me, said, "Well, you for your part will do well also;" at last, recollecting his great age (for I understood him to be two hundred years old) I feared that I might fatigue him by much talking, I took my leave, and he took his, with an air of the most perfect good-breeding. His person, his features, his manner, were all so perfectly characteristic, that I am persuaded an apparition of him could not represent him more completely. This may be said to have been one of the dreams of Pindus, may it not?*

* Whether this is a poetical or real dream of Cowper's, we presume not to decide. It bears so strong a resemblance

How truly I rejoice that you have recovered Guy; that man won my heart the moment I saw him: give my love to him, and tell him I am truly glad he is alive again.

There is much swteeness in those lines from the sonneteer of Avon, and not a little in dear Tom's; an earnest, I trust, of good things to come!

With Mary's kind love, I must now conclude myself,

My dear Brother,

Ever yours,

LIPPUS.

to Milton's vision of the Bishop of Winchester, (the celebrated Dr. Andrews,) as to suggest the probability of having been borrowed from that source. The passage is to be found in Milton's beautiful Latin elegy on the death of that prelate, and is thus translated by Cowper:

" While I that splendour, and the mingled shade
Of fruitful vines with wonder fixt survey'd,
At once, with looks, that beam'd celestial grace,
The seer of Winton stood before my face.
His snowy vesture's hem descending low
His golden sandals swept, and pure as snow
New-fallen shone the mitre on his brow.
Where'er he trod a tremulous sweet sound
Of gladness shook the flow'ry scene around:
Attendant angels clap their starry wings,
The trumpet shakes the sky, all æther rings,
Each chaunts his welcome, ...
Then night retired, and, chas'd by dawning day,
The visionary bliss pass'd all away:
I mourn'd my baniah'd sleep with fond concern;
Frequent to me may dreams like this return.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

Weston, March 4, 1793.

My dear Friend—Since I received your last I have been much indisposed, very blind, and very busy. But I have not suffered all these evils at one and the same time. While the winter lasted I was miserable with a fever on my spirits; when the spring began to approach I was seized with an inflammation in my eyes, and ever since I have been able to use them, have been employed in giving more last touches to Homer, who is on the point of going to the press again.

Though you are Tory I believe, and I am Whig, our sentiments concerning the mad-caps of France are much the same. They are a terrible race, and I have a horror both of them and their principles.* Tacitus is certainly living now, and the quotations you sent me can be nothing but extracts from some letters of his to yourself.

Yours most sincerely,

W. C.

We have already mentioned the interest excited in Cowper's mind by a son of Hayley's, a youth of not more than twelve years of age, and of most promising talents. At Cowper's request he addressed to him the subjoined letter, containing cri-

* Louis XVI. the unhappy King of France, had recently perished on the scaffold, Jan. 21, 1793.

ticisms on his Homer, which do honour to his taste and acuteness. The Poet's reply may also be regarded as a proof of his kind condescension, and amiable sweetness of temper.

TO WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ.

Eartham, March 4, 1793.

Honoured King of Bards—Since you deign to demand the observations of an humble and unexperienced servant of yours, on a work of one who is so much his superior, (as he is ever ready to serve you with all his might,) behold what you demand! but let me desire you not to censure me for my unskilful and perhaps (as they will undoubtedly appear to you) ridiculous observations; but be so kind as to receive them as a mark of respectful affection from

Your obedient servant,

THOMAS HAYLEY.

Book.	Line.	
I.	184	I cannot reconcile myself to these expressions, "Ah cloth'd with impudence, &c." and "Shameless wolf," and "Face of flint."
	195	
	196	
I.	508	"Dishonour'd foul," is, in my opinion, an uncleanly expression.
I.	651	"Reel'd," I think makes it appear as if Olympus was drunk.
I.	749	"Kindler of the fires of Heaven," I think makes Jupiter appear too much like a lamp-lighter.
II.	317 to 319	These lines are, in my opinion, below the elevated genius of Mr. Cowper.
XVIII.	300	This appears to me to be rather Irish, since in line 300 you say, "No one sat," and in 304, "Polydamas rose."

TO MR. THOMAS HAYLEY.

Weston, March 14, 1793.

My dear Little Critic—I thank you heartily for your observations, on which I set a higher value, because they have instructed me as much, and have entertained me more, than all the other strictures of our public judges in these matters. Perhaps I am not much more pleased with *shameless wolf, &c.* than you. But what is to be done, my little man? Coarse as the expressions are, they are no more than equivalent to those of Homer. The invective of the ancients was never tempered with good manners, as your papa can tell you; and my business, you know, is not to be more polite than my author, but to represent him as closely as I can.

Dishonour'd foul I have wiped away, for the reason you give, which is a very just one, and the present reading is this,

> Who had dared dishonour thus
> The life itself, &c.

Your objection to *kindler of the fires of heaven* I had the good fortune to anticipate, and expunged the dirty ambiguity some time since, wondering not a little that I had ever admitted it.

The fault you find with the two first verses of Nestor's speech discovers such a degree of just discernment that, but for your papa's assurance to the contrary, I must have suspected *him* as the author of that remark: much as I should have respected it, if it had been so, I value it, I assure you, my little friend, still more as yours. In the new edition the passage will be found thus altered;

Alas! great sorrow falls on Greece to-day!
Priam, and Priam's sons, with all in Troy——
Oh! how will they exult, and in their hearts
Triumph, once hearing of this broil between
The prime of Greece, in council and in arms!

Where the word *reel* suggests to you the idea of a drunken mountain, it performs the service to which I destined it. It is a bold metaphor; but justified by one of the sublimest passages in scripture, compared with the sublimity of which even that of Homer suffers humiliation.

It is God himself who, speaking, I think, by the prophet Isaiah, says,

"The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard."*

With equal boldness in the same scripture, the poetry of which was never equalled, mountains are said to skip, to break out into singing, and the fields to clap their hands. I intend, therefore, that my Olympus shall be still tipsy.

The accuracy of your last remark, in which you convicted me of a bull, delights me. A fig for all critics but you! The blockheads could not find it. It shall stand thus,

First spake Polydamas——

Homer was more upon his guard than to commit such a blunder, for he says,

ηρχ' ἀγορευειν.

And now, my dear little censor, once more accept my thanks. I only regret that your strictures are so few, being just and sensible as they are.

Tell your papa that he shall hear from me soon:

* Isaiah xxiv. 20.

accept mine, and my dear invalid's affectionate remembrances. Ever yours,

W. C.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.

Weston, March 19, 1793.

My dear Hayley—I am so busy every morning before breakfast (my only opportunity) strutting and stalking in Homeric stilts, that you ought to account it an instance of marvellous grace and favour, that I condescend to write even to you. Sometimes I am seriously almost crazed with the multiplicity of the matters before me, and the little or no time that I have for them; and sometimes I repose myself, after the fatigue of that distraction, on the pillow of despair; a pillow, which has often served me in the time of need, and is become, by frequent use, if not very comfortable, at least convenient. So reposed, I laugh at the world, and say, "Yes, you may gape and expect both Homer and Milton from me, but I'll be hanged if ever you get them."

In Homer you must know I am advanced as far as the fifteenth book of the Iliad, leaving nothing behind me that can reasonably offend the most fastidious; and I design him for public appearance in his new dress as soon as possible, for a reason which any poet may guess, if he will but thrust his hand into his pocket.

You forbid me to tantalize you with an invitation to Weston, and yet invite me to Eartham!—No! no! there is no such happiness in store for me at

present. Had I rambled at all, I was under promise to all my dear mother's kindred to go to Norfolk, and they are dying to see me: but I have told them that die they must, for I cannot go; and ergo, as you will perceive, can go no where else.

Thanks for Mazarin's epitaph!* it is full of witty paradox, and is written with a force and severity which sufficiently bespeak the author. I account it an inestimable curiosity, and shall be happy when time shall serve, with your aid, to make a good

* We have not been able to discover this epitaph, nor does it appear that it was ever translated by Cowper.

Cardinal Mazarin was minister of state to Louis XIII. and during the minority of Louis XIV. The last moments of this great statesman are too edifying not to be recorded. To the ecclesiastic (Joly) who attended him, he said, "I am not satisfied with my state; I wish to feel a more profound sorrow for my sins. I am a great sinner. I have no hope but in the mercy of God." (Je suis un grand criminel, je n'ai d'espérance qu'en la miséricorde divine.) At another time he besought his confessor to treat him like the lowest subject in the realm, being convinced, he said, that there was but one gospel for the great, as well as for the little. (Qu'il n'y avoit qu'un Evangile pour les grands, et pour les petits.)

His sufferings were very acute. "You see," he observed to those around him, "what infirmities and wretchedness the fortunes and dignities of this world come to." He repeated many times the Miserere, (Ps. li.) stretching forth his hands, then clasping them, and lifting up his eyes to heaven, with all the marks of the most sincere devotion.

At midnight he exclaimed, "I am dying—my mind grows indistinct. I trust in Jesus Christ." (Je vais bientôt mourir, mon jugement se trouble, j'espère en Jésus Christ.) Afterwards, frequently repeating the sacred name of Jesus, he expired. (Se mettant en devoir de répéter aussi fréquemment le très-saint nom de Jésus, il expira.)

Histoire du Card. Mazarin, par M. Aubery.

translation of it. But that will be a stubborn business. Adieu! The clock strikes eight; and now for Homer.

W. C.

The two following letters bear an honourable testimony to his bookseller, Johnson, whom he had commissioned his friend, Mr. Rose, to consult, respecting a second and revised edition of his Homeric version.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

Weston, March 27, 1793.

My dear Friend—I must send you a line of congratulation on the event of your transaction with Johnson, since you, I know, partake with me in the pleasure I receive from it. Few of my concerns have been so happily concluded. I am now satisfied with my bookseller, as I have substantial cause to be, and account myself in good hands; a circumstance as pleasant to me as any other part of my business; for I love dearly to be able to confide, with all my heart, in those with whom I am connected, of what kind soever the connexion may be.

The question of printing or not printing the alterations seems difficult to decide. If they are not printed, I shall perhaps disoblige some purchasers of the first edition, and if they are, many others of them, perhaps a great majority, will never care about them. As far as I have gone I have made a fair copy, and when I have finished the whole, will send them to Johnson, together with the interleaved volumes. He will see in a few minutes what it will

be best to do, and by his judgment I shall be determined. The opinion to which I most incline is, that they ought to be printed separately, for they are many of them rather long, here and there a whole speech, or a whole simile, and the verbal and lineal variations are so numerous, that altogether, I apprehend, they will give a new air to the work, and I hope a much improved one.

I forgot to say in the proper place, that some notes, although but very few, I have added already; and may perhaps see here and there opportunity for a few more. But, notes being little wanted, especially by people at all conversant with classical literature, as most readers of Homer are, I am persuaded that were they numerous, they would be deemed an incumbrance. I shall write to Johnson soon, perhaps to-morrow, and then shall say the same thing to him.

In point of health we continue much the same. Our united love, and many thanks for your prosperous negociations, attend yourself and whole family, and especially my little namesake.

Adieu, W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.*

Weston, March 29, 1793.

My dear Friend—Your tidings concerning the slender pittance yet to come are, as you observe, of the melancholy cast. Not being gifted by nature with the means of acquiring much, it is well, however, that she has given me a disposition to be

* Private Correspondence.

contented with little. I have now been so many years habituated to small matters, that I should probably find myself incommoded by greater; and may I but be enabled to shift, as I have been hitherto, unsatisfied wishes will never trouble me much. My pen has helped me somewhat; and, after some years' toil, I begin to reap the benefit. Had I begun sooner, perhaps I should have known fewer pecuniary distresses; or, who can say?—it is possible that I might not have succeeded so well. Fruit ripens only a short time before it rots; and man, in general, arrives not at maturity of mental powers at a much earlier period. I am now busied in preparing Homer for his second appearance. An author should consider himself as bound not to please himself, but the public; and as far as the good pleasure of the public may be learned from the critics, I design to accommodate myself to it. The Latinisms, though employed by Milton, and numbered by Addison among the arts and expedients by which he has given dignity to his style, I shall render into plain English; the rougher lines, though my reason for using them has never been proved a bad one, so far as I know, I shall make perfectly smooth; and shall give body and substance to all that is in any degree feeble and flimsy. And when I have done all this and more, if the critics still grumble, I shall say the very deuce is in them. Yet, that they will grumble, I make no doubt; for, unreasonable as it is to do so, they all require something better than Homer, and that something they will certainly never get from me.

As to the canal that is to be my neighbour, I

ıear little about it. The Courtenays of Weston ıave nothing to do with it, and I have no inter- ːourse with Tyringham. When it is finished, the ɔeople of these parts will have to carry their coals ıeven miles only, which now they bring from Nor- ːhampton or Bedford, both at the distance of fifteen. But, as Balaam says, who shall live when these things are done? It is not for me, a sexagenarian already, to expect that I shall. The chief objection to canals in general seems to be, that, multiplying as they do, they are likely to swallow the coasting trade.

I cannot tell you the joy I feel at the disappointment of the French; pitiful mimics of Spartan and Roman virtue, without a grain of it in their whole character. Ever yours,

W. C.

TO JOHN JOHNSON, ESQ.

Weston, April 11, 1793.

My dearest Johnny—The long muster-roll of my great and small ancestors I signed and dated, and sent up to Mr. Blue-mantle, on Monday, according to your desire. Such a pompous affair, drawn out for my sake, reminds me of the old fable of the mountain in parturition, and a mouse the produce. Rest undisturbed, say I, their lordly, ducal, and royal dust! Had they left me something handsome, I should have respected them more. But perhaps they did not know that such a one as I should have the honour to be numbered among their

descendants.* Well! I have a little bookseller that makes me some amends for their deficiency. He has made me a present; an act of liberality, which I take every opportunity to blazon, as it well deserves. But you, I suppose, have learned it already from Mr. Rose.

Fear not, my man. You will acquit yourself very well, I dare say, both in standing for your degree, and when you have gained it. A little tremor and a little shame-facedness in a stripling, like you, are recommendations rather than otherwise; and so they ought to be, being symptoms of an ingenuous mind, rather unfrequent in this age of brass.

What you say of your determined purpose, with God's help, to take up the cross and despise the shame, gives us both real pleasure. In our pedigree is found one, at least, who did it before you.† Do you the like; and you will meet him in heaven, as sure as the Scripture is the word of God.‡

* Cowper, according to his kinsman, was descended, by the maternal line, through the families of Hippesley of Throughley, in Sussex, and Pellet, of Bolney, in the same county, from the several noble houses of West, Knollys, Carey, Bullen, Howard, and Mowbray; and so by four different lines from Henry the Third, king of England. He justly adds, "distinction of this nature can shed no additional lustre on the memory of Cowper; but genius, however exalted, disdains not, while it boasts not, the splendour of ancestry; and royalty itself may be flattered, and perhaps benefited, by discovering its kindred to such piety, such purity, such talents as his."—*See Sketch of the Life of Cowper, by Dr. Johnson.*

† Dr. Donne, formerly Dean of St Paul's.

‡ "Be wiser thou—like our forefather Donne,
Seek heavenly wealth, and work for God alone."

The quarrel that the world has with evangelic men and doctrines, they would have with a host of angels in the human form. For it is the quarrel o owls with sunshine; of ignorance with divine illumination.

Adieu, my dear Johnny! We shall expect you with earnest desire of your coming, and receive you with much delight.

W. C.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.

Weston, April 23, 1793.

My dear Friend and Brother—Better late than never, and better a little than none at all! Had I been at liberty to consult my inclinations, I would have answered your truly kind and affectionate letter immediately. But I am the busiest man alive, and, when this epistle is dispatched, you will be the only one of my correspondents to whom I shall not be indebted. While I write this, my poor Mary sits mute; which I cannot well bear, and which, together with want of time to write much, will have a curtailing effect on my epistle.

My only studying time is still given to Homer, not to correction and amendment of him (for that is all over) but to writing notes. Johnson has expressed a wish for some, that the unlearned may be a little illuminated concerning classical story and the mythology of the ancients; and his behaviour to me has been so liberal, that I can refuse him

nothing. Poking into the old Greek commentators blinds me. But it is no matter. I am the more like Homer.

Ever yours,
My dearest Hayley,
W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

April 25, 1793.

My dear Friend—Had it not been stipulated between us that, being both at present pretty much engrossed by business, we should write when opportunity offers, I should be frighted at the date of your last: but you will not judge me, I know, by the unfrequency of my letters; nor suppose that my thoughts about you are equally unfrequent. In truth, they are not. No day passes in which you are excluded from them. I am so busy that I do not expect even now to fill my paper. While I write, my poor invalid, who is still unable to amuse herself either with book or needle, sits silent at my side; which makes me, in all my letters, hasten to a conclusion. My only time for study is now before breakfast; and I lengthen it as much as I can, by rising early.

I know not that, with respect to our health, we are either better or worse than when you saw us. Mrs. Unwin, perhaps, has gained a little strength;

* Private Correspondence.

and the advancing spring, I hope, will add to it. As to myself, I am, in body, soul, and spirit, *semper idem*. Prayer, I know, is made for me, and sometimes with great enlargement of heart, by those who offer it: and in this circumstance consists the only evidence I can find, that God is still favourably mindful of me, and has not cast me off for ever.

A long time since, I received a parcel from Dr. Cogshall, of New York; and, looking on the reverse of the packing-paper, saw there an address to you. I conclude, therefore, that you received it first, and at his desire transmitted it to me; consequently you are acquainted with him, and, probably, apprised of the nature of our correspondence. About three years ago I had his first letter to me, which came accompanied by half a dozen American publications. He proposed an exchange of books on religious subjects, as likely to be useful on both sides of the water. Most of those he sent, however, I had seen before. I sent him, in return, such as I could get; but felt myself indifferently qualified for such a negociation. I am now called upon to contribute my quota again; and shall be obliged to you if, in your next, you will mention the titles of half a dozen that may be procured at little cost, that are likely to be new in that country, and useful.

About two months since, I had a letter from Mr. Jeremiah Waring, of Alton in Hampshire. Do you know such a man? I think I have seen his name in advertisements of mathematical works.

He is, however, or seems to be, a very pious man.

I was a little surprised lately, seeing in the last Gentleman's Magazine a letter from somebody at Winchester, in which is a copy of the epitaph of our poor friend Unwin: an English, not a Latin one. It has been pleasant to me sometimes to think, that his dust lay under an inscription of my writing; which I had no reason to doubt, because the Latin one, which I composed at the request of the executors, was, as I understood from Mr. H. Thornton, accepted by them and approved. If they thought, after all, that an English one, as more intelligible, would therefore be preferable, I believe they judged wisely; but, having never heard that they had changed their mind about it, I was at a loss to account for the alteration.

So now, my dear friend, adieu!—When I have thanked you for a barrel of oysters, and added our united kind remembrances to yourself and Miss Catlett, I shall have exhausted the last moment that I can spare at present.

I remain sincerely yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

Weston, May 4, 1793.

My dear Friend—While your sorrow for our common loss was fresh in your mind, I would not write, lest a letter on so distressing a subject should

be too painful both to you and me; and now that I seem to have reached a proper time for doing it, the multiplicity of my literary business will hardly afford me leisure. Both you and I have this comfort when deprived of those we love—at our time of life we have every reason to believe that the deprivation cannot be long. Our sun is setting too, and when the hour of rest arrives we shall rejoin your brother, and many whom we have tenderly loved, our forerunners into a better country.

I will say no more on a theme which it will be better perhaps to treat with brevity; and because the introduction of any other might seem a transition too violent, I will only add that Mrs. Unwin and I are about as well as we at any time have been within the last year.

Truly yours,

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

May 5, 1793.

My dear Friend—My delay to answer your last kind letter, to which likewise you desired a speedy reply, must have seemed rather difficult to explain on any other supposition than that of illness; but illness has not been the cause, although to say the truth, I cannot boast of having been lately very well. Yet has not this been the cause of my silence, but your own advice, very proper and earnestly given to me, to proceed in the revisal of Homer. To this it is owing, that, instead of giving an hour or two before breakfast to my correspon-

dents, I allot that time entirely to my studies. I have nearly given the last touches to the poetry, and am now busied far more laboriously in writing notes at the request of my honest bookseller, transmitted to me in the first instance by you, and afterward repeated by himself. I am, therefore, deep in the old Scholia, and have advanced to the latter part of Iliad nine, explaining, as I go, such passages as may be difficult to unlearned readers, and such only; for notes of that kind are the notes that Johnson desired. I find it a more laborious task than the translation was, and shall be heartily glad when it is over. In the mean time, all the letters I receive remain unanswered, or, if they receive an answer, it is always a short one. Such this must be. Johnny is here, having flown over London.

Homer, I believe, will make a much more respectable appearance than before. Johnson now thinks it will be right to make a separate impression of the amendments.

W. C.

I breakfast every morning on seven or eight pages of the Greek commentators. For so much I am obliged to read in order to select perhaps three or four short notes for the readers of my translation.

Homer is indeed a tie upon me, that must not on any account be broken, till all his demands are satisfied; though I have fancied, while the revisal of the Odyssey was at a distance, that it would ask less labour in the finishing, it is not unlikely, that, when I take it actually in hand, I may find myself

mistaken. Of this at least I am sure, that uneven verse abounds much more in it than it once did in the Iliad; yet to the latter the critics objected on that account, though to the former never; perhaps because they had not read it. Hereafter they shall not quarrel with me on that score. The Iliad is now all smooth turnpike, and I will take equal care, that there shall be no jolts in the Odyssey.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, May 7, 1793.

My dearest Coz.—You have thought me long silent, and so have many others. In fact I have not for many months written punctually to any but yourself and Hayley. My time, the little I have, is so engrossed by Homer, that I have at this moment a bundle of unanswered letters by me, and letters likely to be so. Thou knowest, I dare say, what it is to have a head weary with thinking. Mine is so fatigued by breakfast time, three days out of four, I am utterly incapable of sitting down to my desk again for any purpose whatever.

I am glad I have convinced thee at last that thou art a Tory. Your friend's definition of Whig and Tory may be just for aught I know, as far as the latter are concerned; but respecting the former, I think him mistaken. There is no TRUE Whig who wishes all power in the hands of his own party. The division of it, which the lawyers call tripartite, is exactly what he desires; and he would have nei-

ther king, lords, nor commons unequally trusted, or in the smallest degree predominant. Such a Whig am I, and such Whigs are the true friends of the constitution.

Adieu! my dear, I am dead with weariness.

W. C.

TO THOMAS PARK, ESQ.

May 17, 1793.

Dear Sir—It has not been without frequent self-reproach that I have so long omitted to answer your last very kind and most obliging letter. I am by habit and inclination extremely punctual in the discharge of such arrears, and it is only through necessity, and under constraint of various indispensable engagements of a different kind, that I am become of late much otherwise.

I have never seen Chapman's translation of Homer, and will not refuse your offer of it, unless, by accepting it, I shall deprive you of a curiosity that you cannot easily replace.* The line or two which

* Chapman claims the honour of being the first translator of the whole of the works of Homer. He was born in 1557, and was the contemporary of Shakspeare, Spenser, Jonson, &c. His version of the Iliad was dedicated to Henry, Prince of Wales. He also translated Musæus and Hesiod, and was the author of many other works. He died in 1634, aged seventy-seven. His version of Homer is now obsolete, and rendered tedious by the protracted measure of fourteen syllables; though occasionally it exhibits much spirit. Waller, according to Dryden, could never read his version without emotion, and Pope found it worthy his particular attention.

you quote from him, except that the expression 'a well-written soul' has the quaintness of his times in it, do him credit. He cannot surely be the same Chapman who wrote a poem, I think, on the battle of Hochstadt, in which, when I was a very young man, I remember to have seen the following lines:

> "Think of two thousand gentlemen at least,
> And each man mounted on his capering beast.
> Into the Danube they were push'd by shoals," &c. &c.

These are lines that could not fail to impress the memory, though not altogether in the Homerican style of battle.

I am, as you say, a hermit, and probably an irreclaimable one, having a horror of London that I cannot express, nor indeed very easily account for. Neither am I much less disinclined to migration in general. I did no little violence to my love of home last summer, when I paid Mr. Hayley a visit, and in truth was principally induced to the journey, by a hope that it might be useful to Mrs. Unwin; who, however, derived so little benefit from it, that I purpose for the future to avail myself of the privilege my years may reasonably claim, by compelling my younger friends to visit *me*. But even this is a point which I cannot well compass at present, both because I am too busy, and because poor Mrs. Unwin is not able to bear the fatigue of company. Should better days arrive, days of more leisure to me, and of some health to her, I shall not fail to give you notice of the change, and shall then hope for the pleasure of seeing you at Weston.

The epitaph you saw is on the tomb of the same Mr. Unwin to whom the "Tirocinium" is inscribed; the son of the lady above mentioned. By the desire of his executors I wrote a Latin one, which they approved, but it was not approved by a relation of the deceased, and therefore was not used. He objected to the mention I had made in it of his mother having devoted him to the service of God in his infancy. She did it, however, and not in vain, as I wrote my epitaph. Who wrote the English one I know not.

The poem called the "Slave" is not mine, nor have I ever seen it. I wrote two on the subject—one entitled "The Negro's Complaint," and the other "The Morning Dream." With thanks for all your kindness, and the patience you have with me,

I remain,

Dear Sir,

Sincerely yours,

W. C.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.

Weston, May 21, 1793.

My dear Brother—You must either think me extremely idle, or extremely busy, that I have made your last very kind letter wait so very long for an answer. The truth however is, that I am neither; but have had time enough to have scribbled to you, had I been able to scribble at all. To explain this riddle I must give you a short account of my proceedings.

I rise at six every morning, and fag till near eleven, when I breakfast. The consequence is, that I am so exhausted as not to be able to write, when the opportunity offers. You will say—"Breakfast before you work, and then your work will not fatigue you." I answer—"Perhaps I might, and your counsel would probably prove beneficial; but I cannot spare a moment for eating in the early part of the morning, having no other time for study." This uneasiness of which I complain is a proof that I am somewhat stricken in years; and there is no other cause by which I can account for it, since I go early to bed, always between ten and eleven, and seldom fail to sleep well. Certain it is, ten years ago I could have done as much, and sixteen years ago did actually much more, without suffering fatigue or any inconvenience from my labours. How insensibly old age steals on, and how often is it actually arrived before we suspect it! Accident alone, some occurrence that suggests a comparison of our former with our present selves, affords the discovery. Well! it is always good to be undeceived, especially on an article of such importance.

There has been a book lately published, entitled, "Man as he is." I have heard a high character of it, as admirably written, and am informed, that for that reason, and because it inculcates Whig principles, it is by many imputed to you. I contradict this report, assuring my informant, that had it been yours, I must have known it, for that you have bound yourself to make me your father-confessor on all such wicked occasions, and not to conceal

from me even a murder, should you happen to commit one.*

I will not trouble you, at present, to send me any more books with a view to my notes on Homer. I am not without hopes that Sir John Throckmorton, who is expected here from Venice in a short time, may bring me Villoison's edition of the Odyssey. He certainly will, if he found it published, and that alone will be *instar omnium.*

Adieu, my dearest brother! Give my love to Tom, and thank him for his book, of which I believe I need not have deprived him, intending that my readers shall detect the occult instruction contained in Homer's stories for themselves.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Weston, June 1, 1793.

My dearest Cousin—You will not (you say) come to us now; and you tell us not when you will. These assignations, *sine die*, are such shadowy things that I can neither grasp nor get any comfort from them. Know you not that hope is the next best thing to enjoyment? Give us then a hope, and a determinate time for that hope to fix on, and we will endeavour to be satisfied.

Johnny is gone to Cambridge, called thither to take his degree, and is much missed by me. He is such an active little fellow in my service, that he

* The real author was Robert Bage.

cannot be otherwise. In three weeks, however, I shall hope to have him again for a fortnight. I have had a letter from him, containing an incident which has given birth to the following.

TO A YOUNG FRIEND,*

ON HIS ARRIVAL AT CAMBRIDGE WET, WHEN NO RAIN HAD FALLEN THERE.

If Gideon's fleece, which drench'd with dew he found,
While moisture none refreshed the herbs around,
Might fitly represent the Church, endow'd
With heavenly gifts, to heathens not allow'd;
In pledge, perhaps, of favours from on high,
Thy locks were wet, when other locks were dry.
Heav'n grant us half the omen! may we see,
Not drought on others, but much dew on thee!

These are spick and span. Johnny himself has not yet seen them. By the way, he has filled your book completely; and I will give thee a guinea if thou wilt search thy old book for a couple of songs and two or three other pieces, of which I know thou madest copies at the vicarage, and which I have lost. The songs I know are pretty good, and I would fain recover them.

W. C.

TO THE REV. MR. HURDIS.

Weston, June 6, 1793.

My dear Sir—I seize a passing moment merely to say that I feel for your distresses, and sincerely

* The Poet's kinsman.

pity you, and I shall be happy to learn from your next, that your sister's amendment has superseded the necessity you feared of a journey to London. Your candid account of the effect that your afflictions have both on your spirits and temper I can perfectly understand, having laboured much in that fire myself, and perhaps more than any man. It is in such a school, however, that we must learn, if we ever truly learn it, the natural depravity of the human heart, and of our own in particular; together with the consequence that necessarily follows such wretched premises; our indispensable need of the atonement, and our inexpressible obligations to him who made it. This reflection cannot escape a thinking mind, looking back on those ebullitions of fretfulness and impatience to which it has yielded in a season of great affliction.

Having lately had company, who left us only on the 4th, I have done nothing—nothing indeed, since my return from Sussex, except a trifle or two, which it was incumbent upon me to write. Milton hangs in doubt: neither spirits nor opportunity suffice me for that labour. I regret continually that I ever suffered myself to be persuaded to undertake it. The most that I hope to effect is a complete revisal of my own Homer. Johnson told my friend, who has just left me, that it will begin to be reviewed in the next *Analytical*, and he *hoped* the review of it would not offend me. By this I understand, that if I am not offended it will be owing more to my own equanimity than to the mildness of the critic. So be it! He will put an opportunity

if victory over myself into my hands, and I will endeavour not to lose it.

Adieu!

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.*

June 12, 1793.

My dear Friend—You promise to be contented with a short line, and a short one you must have, hurried over in the little interval I have happened to find between the conclusion of my morning task and breakfast. Study has this good effect, at least; it makes me an early riser, who might otherwise, perhaps, be as much given to dozing as my readers.

The scanty opportunity I have, I shall employ in telling you what you principally wish to be told—the present state of mine and Mrs. Unwin's health. In her I cannot perceive any alteration for the better; and must be satisfied, I believe, as indeed I have great reason to be, if she does not alter for the worse. She uses the orchard-walk daily, but always supported between two, and is still unable to employ herself as formerly. But she is cheerful, seldom in much pain, and has always strong confidence in the mercy and faithfulness of God.

As to myself, I have always the same song to sing—Well in body, but sick in spirit: sick, nigh unto death.

* Private Correspondence.

Seasons return, but not to me returns
God, or the sweet approach of heavenly day,
Or sight of cheering truth, or pardon seal'd,
Or joy, or hope, or Jesus' face divine;
But cloud, &c.

I could easily set my complaint to Milton's tone, and accompany him through the whole passage,* on the subject of a blindness more deplorable than his; but time fails me.

I feel great desire to see your intended publication; a desire which the manner in which Mr. Bull speaks of it, who called here lately, has no tendency to allay. I believe I forgot to thank you for your last poetical present: not because I was not much pleased with it, but I write always in a hurry, and in a hurry must now conclude myself, with our united love,

Yours, my dear friend,
Most sincerely,
W. C.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.

Weston, June 29, 1793.

Dear architect of fine CHATEAUX in air
Worthier to stand for ever if they could,
Than any built of stone, or yet of wood,
For back of royal elephant to bear!

Oh for permission from the skies to share,
Much to my own, though little to thy good,
With thee (not subject to the jealous mood!)
A partnership of literary ware!

* Paradise Lost, Book iii.

But I am bankrupt now; and doom'd henceforth
To drudge, in descant dry,* on others' lays;
Bards, I acknowledge, of unequall'd worth!
But what is commentator's happiest praise?

That he has furnish'd lights for other eyes,
Which they who need them use, and then despise.

What remains for me to say on this subject, my dear brother bard, I will say in prose. There are other impediments which I could not comprise within the bounds of a sonnet.

My poor Mary's infirm condition makes it impossible for me, at present, to engage in a work such as you propose. My thoughts are not sufficiently free, nor have I, or can I, by any means, find opportunity; added to it comes a difficulty which, though you are not at all aware of it, presents itself to me under a most forbidding appearance. Can you guess it? No, not you; neither perhaps will you be able to imagine that such a difficulty can possibly subsist. If your hair begins to bristle, stroke it down again, for there is no need why it should erect itself. It concerns me, not you. I know myself too well not to know that I am nobody in verse, unless in a corner, and alone, and unconnected in my operations. This is not owing to want of love for you, my brother, or the most consummate confidence in you; for I have both in a degree that has not been exceeded in the experience of any friend you have, or ever had. But I am so made up—I will not enter into a meta-

* He alludes to his notes on Homer.

physical analysis of my strange composition, in order to detect the true cause of this evil; but on a general view of the matter, I suspect that it proceeds from that shyness which has been my effectual and almost fatal hindrance on many other important occasions, and which I should feel, I well know, on this, to a degree that would perfectly cripple me. No! I shall neither do, nor attempt any thing of consequence more, unless my poor Mary get better; nor even then, unless it should please God to give me another nature, in concert with any man—I could not, even with my own father or brother, were they now alive. Small game must serve me at present, and, till I have done with Homer and Milton, a sonnet, or some such matter, must content me. The utmost that I aspire to, and Heaven knows with how feeble a hope, is to write at some better opportunity, and when my hands are free, "The Four Ages." Thus I have opened my heart unto thee.*

W. C.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.

Weston, July 7, 1793.

My dearest Hayley—If the excessive heat of this day, which forbids me to do any thing else,

* What the proposed literary partnership was, which Hayley suggested, we know not; it is evident that it was not the poem of "The Four Ages," which forms the subject of the following letter, and in which Cowper acquiesced.

will permit me to scribble to you, I shall rejoice. To do this is a pleasure to me at all times, but to do it now, a double one; because I am in haste to tell you how much I am delighted with your projected quadruple alliance, and to assure you, that if it please God to afford me health, spirits, ability, and leisure, I will not fail to devote them all to the production of my quota of "The Four Ages."*

You are very kind to humour me as you do, and had need be a little touched yourself with all my oddities, that you may know how to administer to mine. All whom I love do so, and I believe it to be impossible to love heartily those who do not. People must not do me good in *their* way, but in my *own*, and then they do me good indeed. My pride, my ambition, and my friendship for you, and the interest I take in my own dear self, will all be consulted and gratified by an arm-in-arm appearance with you in public; and I shall work with more zeal and assiduity at Homer, and, when Homer is finished, at Milton, with the prospect of such a coalition before me. But what shall I do with a multitude of small

* Hayley made a second proposition to unite with Cowper in the projected poem of "The Four Ages," and to engage the aid of two distinguished artists, who were to embellish the work with appropriate designs. We believe that Lawrence and Flaxman were the persons to whom Hayley refers. We cannot sufficiently regret the failure of this plan, which would have enriched literature and art with so happy a specimen of poetical and professional talent. But the period was unhappily approaching which was to suspend the fine powers of Cowper's mind, and to shroud them in the veil of darkne .

pieces, from which I intended to select the best, and adding them to "The Four Ages," to have made a volume? Will there be room for them upon your plan? I have re-touched them, and will re-touch them again. Some of them will suggest pretty devices to a designer, and in short, I have a desire not to lose them.

I am at this moment, with all the imprudence natural to poets, expending nobody knows what, in embellishing my premises, or rather the premises of my neighbour Courtenay, which is more poetical still. I have built one summer-house already, with the boards of my old study, and am building another spick and span, as they say. I have also a stone-cutter now at work, setting a bust of my dear old Grecian on a pedestal; and beside all this, I meditate still more that is to be done in the autumn. Your project therefore is most opportune, as any project must needs be that has so direct a tendency to put money into the pocket of one so likely to want it.

> Ah brother poet! send me of your shade,
> And bid the Zephyrs hasten to my aid!
> Or, like a worm unearth'd at noon, I go
> Dispatch'd by sunshine, to the shades below.

My poor Mary is as well as the heat will allow her to be, and whether it be cold or sultry, is always affectionately mindful of you and yours.

W. C.

It is due to the memory of my revered friend and brother-in-law, the Rev. Dr. Johnson, to state that Cowper was indebted to his ever watchful and affectionate kindness for what he here calls his "dear old Grecian." With that amiable solicitude which formed so prominent a feature in his character, and which was always seeking how to please, and to confer a favour, he had contrived to procure an antique bust of Homer, to gratify Cowper's partiality for his favourite bard. No present could possibly have been more acceptable or appropriate. We cannot avoid remarking, on this occasion, that, to anticipate a want and to supply it, to know how to minister to the gratification of another, and to enhance the gift by the grace of bestowing it, is one of the great arts of social and domestic life. It is not the amount, nor the intrinsic value of the favour, for the power of giving must in that case be restricted to the few. To give royally requires not only an enlarged heart, but ample and enlarged means. It is the appropriateness of the time and the occasion, the grace of the manner, and the unobtrusiveness of its character, that constitutes the value of the gift and endears the giver.

Cowper recorded his gratitude by the following poetical tribute, which has always been justly admired.

Kinsman belov'd, and as a son by me!
When I behold this fruit of thy regard,
The sculptur'd form of my old fav'rite bard!
I rev'rence feel for him, and love for thee.

Joy too, and grief! much joy that there should be
Wise men, and learn'd, who grudge not to reward
With some applause my bold attempt and hard,
Which others scorn: critics by courtesy!

The grief is this, that sunk in Homer's mine
I lose my precious years, now soon to fail!
Handling his gold, which, howsoe'er it shine,
Proves dross when balanc'd in the Christian scale!
Be wiser thou!—like our forefather Donne,
Seek heavenly wealth, and work for God alone!

TO THOMAS PARK, ESQ.

W. U. July 15, 1793.

Dear Sir—Within these few days I have received, by favour of Miss Knapps, your acceptable present of Chapman's translation of the Iliad. I know not whether the book be a rarity, but a curiosity it certainly is. I have as yet seen but little of it, enough however to make me wonder that any man, with so little taste for Homer or apprehension of his manner, should think it worth while to undertake the laborious task of translating him; the hope of pecuniary advantage may perhaps account for it.*

* Chapman's version is thus described by Warton: he "frequently retrenches or impoverishes what he could not feel and express," and yet is "not always without strength and spirit." By Anton, in his Philosophical Satires, published in 1616, he is characterised as

"Greeke-thund'ring Chapman, beaten to the age,
With a deepe furie and a sudden rage."

The testimony of Bishop Percy is flattering. "Had Chapman," he observes, "translated the Iliad in blank verse, it had *been one of* our chief classic performances."

His information, I fear, was not much better than his verse, for I have consulted him in one passage of some difficulty, and find him giving a sense of his own, not at all warranted by the words of Homer. Pope sometimes does this, and sometimes omits the difficult part entirely. I can boast of having done neither, though it has cost me infinite pains to exempt myself from the necessity.

I have seen a translation by Hobbes, which I prefer for its greater clumsiness. Many years have passed since I saw it, but it made me laugh immoderately. Poetry that is not good can only make amends for that deficiency by being ridiculous; and, because the translation of Hobbes has at least this recommendation, I shall be obliged to you, should it happen to fall in your way, if you would be so kind as to procure it for me. The only edition of it I ever saw, (and perhaps there never was another,*) was a very thick 12mo., both print and paper bad, a sort of book that would be sought in vain, perhaps, anywhere but on a stall.

When you saw Lady Hesketh, you saw the relation of mine with whom I have been more intimate, even from childhood, than any other. She has seen much of the world, understands it well, and, having great natural vivacity, is of course one of the most agreeable companions.

I have now arrived almost at a close of my la-

* Cowper is mistaken in this supposition. Wood, in his Athenæ, records an edition of the Iliad in 1675; and of the Odyssey in 1677, and there was a re-impression of both in 1686.

bours on the Iliad, and have left nothing behind me, I believe, which I shall wish to alter on any future occasion. In about a fortnight or three weeks I shall begin to do the same for the Odyssey, and hope to be able to perform it while the Iliad is in printing. Then Milton will demand all my attention, and when I shall find opportunity either to revise your MSS. or to write a poem of my own,* which I have in contemplation, I can hardly say. Certainly not till both these tasks are accomplished.

I remain, dear Sir,
With many thanks for your kind present,
Sincerely yours,

W. C.

TO MRS. CHARLOTTE SMITH.

Weston, July 25, 1793.

My dear Madam—Many reasons concurred to make me impatient for the arrival of your most acceptable present,† and among them was the fear lest you should perhaps suspect me of tardiness in acknowledging so great a favour; a fear, that, as often as it prevailed, distressed me exceedingly. At length I have received it, and my little bookseller assures me, that he sent it the very day he got it; by some mistake, however, the wagon brought it instead of the coach, which occasioned a delay that I could ill afford.

* The Four Ages.

† The poem of the Emigrants, which was dedicated to Cowper.

It came this morning, about an hour ago; consequently I have not had time to peruse the poem, though you may be sure I have found enough for the perusal of the dedication. I have, in fact, given it three readings, and in each have found increasing pleasure.

I am a whimsical creature; when I write for the public, I write of course with a desire to please, in other words to acquire fame, and I labour accordingly; but when I find that I have succeeded, feel myself alarmed, and ready to shrink from the acquisition.

This I have felt more than once, and when I saw my name at the head of your Dedication, I felt it again; but the consummate delicacy of your praise soon convinced me that I might spare my blushes, and that the demand was less upon my modesty than my gratitude. Of that be assured, dear Madam. and of the truest esteem and respect of your most obliged and affectionate

Humble servant,

W. C.

P. S.—I should have been much grieved to have let slip this opportunity of thanking you for your charming sonnets, and my two most agreeable old friends Monimia and Orlando.*

* Mrs. Charlotte Smith is well known as an authoress, and particularly for her beautiful sonnets. She was formerly a great eulogist of the French Revolution, but the horrors which distinguished that political æra led to a change in her sentiments, which she publicly avowed in her "Banished Man." There is a *great plaintiveness* of feeling in all

TO THE REV. MR. GREATHEED.

Weston, July 27, 1793.

I was not without some expectation of a line from you, my dear Sir, though you did not promise me one at your departure, and am happy not to have been disappointed; still happier to learn that you and Mrs. Greatheed are well, and so delightfully situated. Your kind offer to us of sharing with you the house which you at present inhabit, added to the short, but lively, description of the scenery that surrounds it, wants nothing to win our acceptance, should it please God to give Mrs. Unwin a little more strength, and should I ever be master of my time so as to be able to gratify myself with what would please me most. But many have claims upon us, and some who cannot absolutely be said to have any would yet complain and think themselves slighted, should we prefer rocks and caves to them. In short, we are called so many ways, that these numerous demands are likely to operate as a *remora*, and to keep us fixed at home. Here we can occasionally have the pleasure of yours and Mrs. Greatheed's company, and to have it here must I believe content us. Hayley in his last letter gives me reason to expect the pleasure of seeing him and his dear boy Tom, in the autumn. He will use all his eloquence to draw us to

her writings, arising from the unfortunate incidents of her chequered life. We remember this lady, with her family, formerly resident at Oxford, where she excited much interest by her talents and misfortunes.

Eartham again. My cousin Johnny, of Norfolk, holds me under promise to make my first trip thither, and the very same promise I have hastily made to visit Sir John and Lady Throckmorton, at Bucklands. How to reconcile such clashing promises, and give satisfaction to all, would puzzle me, had I nothing else to do; and therefore, as I say, the result will probably be, that we shall find ourselves obliged to go nowhere, since we cannot every where.

* * * *

Wishing you both safe at home again, and to see you as soon as may be here,

I remain,

Affectionately yours,

W. C

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.

Weston, July 27, 1793.

I have been vexed with myself, my dearest brother, and with every thing about me, not excepting even Homer himself, that I have been obliged so long to delay an answer to your last kind letter. If I listen any longer to calls another way, I shall hardly be able to tell you how happy we are in the hope of seeing you in the autumn, before the autumn will have arrived. Thrice welcome will you and your dear boy be to us, and the longer you will afford us your company, the more welcome. I have

set up the head of Homer on a famous fine pedestal, and a very majestic appearance he makes. I am now puzzled about a motto, and wish you to decide for me between two, one of which I have composed myself, a Greek one as follows:

Εικονα τις ταυτην; κλυτον ανερος ουνομ' ολωλεν.
Ουνομα δ' ουτος ανηρ αφθιτον αιεν εχει.

The other is my own translation of a passage in the Odyssey, the original of which I have seen used as a motto to an engraved head of Homer many a time.

The present edition of the lines stands thus,

Him partially the muse,
And dearly loved, yet gave him good and ill:
She quenched his sight, but gave him strains divine.

Tell me, by the way, (if you ever had any speculations on the subject,) what is it you suppose Homer to have meant in particular, when he ascribed his blindness to the muse, for that he speaks of himself under the name of Demodocus in the eighth book, I believe is by all admitted. How could the old bard study himself blind, when books were either so few or none at all? And did he write his poems? If neither were the cause, as seems reasonable to imagine, how could he incur his blindness by such means as could be justly imputable to the muse? Would mere thinking blind him? I want to know:

"Call up some spirit from the vasty deep!"

I said to my Sam* —— "Sam, build me a shed

* Samuel Roberts, his faithful servant.

in the garden, with any thing that you can find, and make it rude and rough like one of those at Eartham."——"Yes, Sir," says Sam, and straightway laying his own noddle, and the carpenter's noddle together, has built me a thing fit for Stow Gardens. Is not this vexatious?——I threaten to inscribe it thus:

Beware of building? I intended
Rough logs and thatch, and thus it ended.

But my Mary says, I shall break Sam's heart and the carpenter's too, and will not consent to it. Poor Mary sleeps but ill. How have you lived who cannot bear a sun-beam?

Adieu!

My dearest Hayley,

W. C.

The following seasonable and edifying letter, addressed by Cowper to his beloved kinsman, on the occasion of his ordination, will be read with interest.

TO THE REV. JOHN JOHNSON.*

August 2, 1793.

My dearest Johnny—The bishop of Norwich has won my heart by his kind and liberal behaviour to you; and, if I knew him, I would tell him so.

I am glad that your auditors find your voice strong and your utterance distinct; glad, too, that your doctrine has hitherto made you no enemies.

* *Private Correspondence.*

You have a gracious Master, who, it seems, will not suffer you to see war in the beginning. It will be a wonder, however, if you do not, sooner or later, find out that sore place in every heart which can ill endure the touch of apostolic doctrine: Somebody will smart in his conscience, and you will hear of it. I say not this, my dear Johnny, to terrify, but to prepare you for that which is likely to happen, and which, troublesome as it may prove, is yet devoutly to be wished; for, in general, there is little good done by preachers till the world begins to abuse them. But understand me aright. I do not mean that you should give them unnecessary provocation, by scolding and railing at them, as some, more zealous than wise, are apt to do. That were to deserve their anger. No; there is no need of it. The self-abasing doctrines of the gospel will, of themselves, create you enemies; but remember this, for your comfort—they will also, in due time, transform them into friends, and make them love you, as if they were your own children. God give you many such; as, if you are faithful to his cause, I trust he will!

Sir John and Lady Throckmorton have lately arrived in England, and are now at the Hall. They have brought me from Rome a set of engravings on Odyssey subjects, by Flaxman, whom you have heard Hayley celebrate. They are very fine, very much in the antique style, and a present from the Dowager Lady Spencer.

Ever yours,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Weston, August 11, 1793.

My dearest Cousin—I am glad that my poor and hasty attempts to express some little civility to Miss Fanshaw and the amiable Count,* have your and her approbation. The lines addressed to her were not what I would have made them, but lack of time, a lack which always presses me, would not suffer me to improve them. Many thanks for her letter, which, were my merits less the subject of it, I should without scruple say is an excellent one. She writes with the force and accuracy of a person skilled in more languages than are spoken in the present day, as I doubt not that she is. I perfectly approve the theme she recommends to me, but am at present so totally absorbed in Homer, that all I do beside is ill done, being hurried over; and I would not execute ill a subject of her recommending.

I shall watch the walnuts with more attention than they who eat them, which I do in some hope, though you do not expressly say so, that when their threshing-time arrives, we shall see you here. I am now going to paper my new study, and in a short time it will be fit to inhabit.

Lady Spencer has sent me a present from Rome, by the hands of Sir John Throckmorton, engravings of Odyssey subjects, after figures by Flaxman,† a

* Count Gravina, the Spanish Admiral.

† These illustrations are executed in outline, and form one of the most beautiful and elegant specimens of professional art.

statuary at present resident there, of high repute, and much a friend of Hayley's.

Thou livest, my dear, I acknowledge, in a very fine country, but they have spoiled it by building London in it.

Adieu,

W. C.

That the allusion in the former part of the letter, may be understood, it is necessary to state, that Lady Hesketh had lent a manuscript poem of Cowper's to her friend Miss Fanshaw, with an injunction that she should neither show it nor take a copy. This promise was violated, and the reason assigned is expressed by the young lady in the following verses.

What wonder! if my wavering hand
  Had dared to disobey,
When Hesketh gave a harsh command,
  And Cowper led astray?

Then take this tempting gift of thine,
  By pen uncopied yet;
But, canst thou memory confine,
  Or teach me to forget?

More lasting than the touch of art
  The characters remain,
When written by a feeling heart
  On tablets of the brain.

COWPER'S REPLY.

To be remember'd thus is fame,
  And in the first degree;
And did the few, like her, the same,
  The press might rest for me.

So Homer, in the memory stored
Of many a Grecian belle,
Was once preserved—a richer hoard,
But never lodged so well.

We add the verses addressed to Count Gravina, whom Cowper calls "the amiable Count," and who had translated the well-known stanzas on the Rose* into Italian verse.

My Rose, Gravina, blooms anew,
And, steep'd not now in rain,
But in Castalian streams by you,
Will never fade again.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.

Weston, Aug. 15, 1793.

Instead of a pound or two, spending a mint
Must serve me at least, I believe, with a hint,
That building, and building, a man may be driven
At last out of doors, and have no house to live in.

Besides, my dearest brother, they have not only built for me what I did not want, but have ruined a notable tetrastic by doing so. I had written one which I designed for a hermitage, and it will by no means suit the fine and pompous affair which they have made instead of one. So that as a poet, I am every way afflicted; made poorer than I need have been, and robbed of my verses: what case can be more deplorable?†

* 'The Rose had been washed, just washed in a shower,' &c.

† The lines here alluded to are entitled, "Inscription for an Hermitage;" and are as follows:—

You must not suppose me ignorant of what Flaxman has done, or that I have not seen it, or that I am not actually in possession of it, at least of the engravings which you mention. In fact, I have had them more than a fortnight. Lady Dowager Spencer, to whom I inscribed my Odyssey, and who was at Rome when Sir John Throckmorton was there, charged him with them as a present to me, and arriving here lately he executed his commission. Romney, I doubt not, is right in his judgment of them; he is an artist himself, and cannot easily be mistaken; and I take his opinion as an oracle, the rather because it coincides exactly with my own. The figures are highly classical, antique, and elegant; especially that of Penelope, who, whether she wakes or sleeps, must necessarily charm all beholders.

Your scheme of embellishing my Odyssey with these plates is a kind one, and the fruit of your benevolence to me; but Johnson, I fear, will hardly stake so much money as the cost would amount to, on a work, the fate of which is at present uncertain. Nor could we adorn the Odyssey in this splendid manner, unless we had similar ornaments to bestow on the Iliad. Such, I presume, are not ready, and much time must elapse even if Flaxman should accede to the plan, before he could possibly prepare them. Happy indeed should I be to see a work of

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This cabin, Mary, in my sight appears,
Built as it has been in our waning years,
A rest afforded to our weary feet,
Preliminary to—the last retreat.

mine so nobly accompanied, but, should that good fortune ever attend me, it cannot take place till the third or fourth edition shall afford the occasion. This I regret, and I regret too that you will have seen them before I can have an opportunity to show them to you. Here is sixpence for you if you will abstain from the sight of them while you are in London.

> The sculptor?—nameless, though once dear to fame:
> But this man bears an everlasting name.*

So I purpose it shall stand; and on the pedestal, when you come, in that form you will find it. The added line from the Odyssey is charming, but the assumption of sonship to Homer seems too daring; suppose it stood thus,

> Ως δε παις φ πατρι, και ουποτε λησομαι αυτου.

I am not sure that this would be clear of the same objection, and it departs from the text still more.

With my poor Mary's best love and our united wishes to see you here, I remain,

My dearest brother,

Ever yours,

W. C.

TO MRS. COURTENAY.

Weston, Aug. 20, 1793.

My dearest Catharina is too reasonable, I know, to expect news from me, who live on the outside

* A translation of Cowper's Greek verses on his bust of Homer.

of the world, and know nothing that passes within it. The best news is, that, though you are gone, you are not gone for ever, as once I supposed you were, and said that we should probably meet no more. Some news however we have; but then I conclude that you have already received it from the Doctor, and that thought almost deprives me of all courage to relate it. On the evening of the feast, Bob Archer's house affording, I suppose, the best room for the purpose, all the lads and lasses who felt themselves disposed to dance, assembled there. Long time they danced, at least long time they did something a little like it, when at last the company having retired, the fiddler asked Bob for a lodging; Bob replied—"that his beds were all full of his own family, but if he chose it he would show him a hay-cock, where he might sleep as sound as in any bed whatever."—So forth they went together, and when they reached the place, the fiddler knocked down Bob, and demanded his money. But, happily for Bob, though he might be knocked down, and actually was so, yet he could not possibly be robbed, having nothing. The fiddler, therefore, having amused himself with kicking him and beating him, as he lay, as long as he saw good, left him, and has never been heard of since, nor inquired after indeed, being no doubt the last man in the world whom Bob wishes to see again.

By a letter from Hayley, to-day, I learn, that Flaxman, to whom we are indebted for those Odyssey figures which Lady Frog brought over, has almost finished a set for the Iliad also. I

should be glad to embellish my Homer with them, but neither my bookseller, nor I, shall probably choose to risk so expensive an ornament on a work, whose reception with the public is at present doubtful.

Adieu, my dearest Catharina. Give my best love to your husband. Come home as soon as you can, and accept our united very best wishes.

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

Weston, Aug. 22, 1793.

My dear Friend—I rejoice that you have had so pleasant an excursion, and have beheld so many beautiful scenes. Except the delightful Upway, I have seen them all. I have lived much at Southampton, have slept and caught a sore throat at Lyndhurst, and have swum in the bay of Weymouth. It will give us great pleasure to see you here, should your business give you an opportunity to finish your excursions of this season with one to Weston.

As for my going on, it is much as usual. I rise at six; an industrious and wholesome practice from which I have never swerved since March. I breakfast generally about eleven—have given the intermediate time to my old delightful bard. Villoisson no longer keeps me company, I therefore now jog along with Clarke and Barnes at my elbow, and from the excellent annotations of the former select such as I think likely to be useful, or that

recommend themselves by the amusement they may afford; of which sorts there are not a few. Barnes also affords me some of both kinds, but not so many, his notes being chiefly paraphrastical or grammatical. My only fear is, lest between them both I should make my work too voluminous.

W. C.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.

Weston, Aug. 27, 1793.

I thank you, my dear brother, for consulting the Gibbonian oracle on the question concerning Homer's muse and his blindness. I proposed it likewise to my little neighbour Buchanan, who gave me precisely the same answer. I felt an insatiable thirst to learn something new concerning him, and, despairing of information from others, was willing to hope, that I had stumbled on matter unnoticed by the commentators, and might, perhaps, acquire a little intelligence from himself. But the great and the little oracle together have extinguished that hope, and I despair now of making any curious discoveries about him.

Since Flaxman (which I did not know till your letter told me so) has been at work for the Iliad, as well as the Odyssey, it seems a great pity, that the engravings should not be bound up with some Homer or other; and, as I said before, I should have been too proud to have bound them up in mine. But there is an objection, at least such it

seems to me, that threatens to disqualify them for such a use, namely, the shape and size of them, which are such, that no book of the usual form could possibly receive them, save in a folded state, which, I apprehend, would be to murder them.

The monument of Lord Mansfield, for which you say he is engaged, will (I dare say) prove a noble effort of genius.* Statuaries, as I have heard an eminent one say, do not much trouble themselves about a likeness: else I would give much to be able to communicate to Flaxman the perfect idea that I have of the subject, such as he was forty years ago. He was at that time wonderfully handsome, and would expound the most mysterious intricacies of the law, or recapitulate both matter and evidence of a cause, as long as from hence to Eartham, with an intelligent smile on his features, that bespoke plainly the perfect ease with which he did it. The most abstruse studies (I believe) never cost him any labour.

You say nothing lately of your intended journey our way: yet the year is waning, and the shorter days give you a hint to lose no time unnecessarily. Lately we had the whole family at the Hall, and now we have nobody. The Throckmortons are gone into Berkshire, and the Courtenays into Yorkshire. They are so pleasant a family, that I heartily wish you to see them; and at the same time wish to see you before they return, which will not be sooner than October. How shall I reconcile these wishes seemingly opposite? Why, by wishing that you may

* The celebrated monument in Westminster Abbey.

come soon and stay long. I know no other way of doing it.

My poor Mary is much as usual. I have set up Homer's head, and inscribed the pedestal; my own Greek at the top, with your translation under it, and

Ως δε ταις ω πατρι, &c.

It makes altogether a very smart and learned appearance.*

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

August 29, 1793.

Your question, at what time your coming to us will be most agreeable, is a knotty one, and such as, had I the wisdom of Solomon, I should be puzzled to answer. I will therefore leave it still a question, and refer the time of your journey Weston-ward entirely to your own election: adding this one limitation, however, that I do not wish to see you exactly at present, on account of the unfinished state of my study, the wainscot of which still smells of paint, and which is not yet papered. But to return: as I have insinuated, thy pleasant company is the thing which I always wish, and as much at one time as at another. I believe, if I examine myself

* This bust and pedestal were afterwards removed to Sir George Throckmorton's grounds, and placed in the shrubbery.

minutely, since I despair of ever having it in the height of summer, which for your sake I should desire most, the depth of the winter is the season which would be most eligible to me. For then it is, that in general I have most need of a cordial, and particularly in the month of January. I am sorry, however, that I departed so far from my first purpose, and am answering a question, which I declared myself unable to answer. Choose thy own time, secure of this, that, whatever time that be, it will always to us be a welcome one.

I thank you for your pleasant extract of Miss Fanshaw's letter.

> Her pen drops eloquence as sweet
> As any muse's tongue can speak;
> Nor need a scribe, like her, regret
> Her want of Latin or of Greek.*

And now, my dear, adieu! I have done more than I expected, and begin to feel myself exhausted with so much scribbling at the end of four hours close application to study.

W. C.

TO THE REV. MR. JOHNSON.

Weston, Sept. 4, 1793.

My dearest Johnny—To do a kind thing, and in a kind manner, is a double kindness, and no man is

* Miss Fanshaw was an intimate friend of Lady Hesketh's, and frequently residing with her.

more addicted to both than you, or more skilful in contriving them. Your plan to surprise me agreeably succeeded to admiration. It was only the day before yesterday, that, while we walked after dinner in the orchard, Mrs. Unwin between Sam and me, hearing the Hall clock, I observed a great difference between that and ours, and began immediately to lament, as I had often done, that there was not a sun-dial in all Weston to ascertain the true time for us. My complaint was long, and lasted till, having turned into the grass-walk, we reached the new building at the end of it; where we sat awhile and reposed ourselves. In a few minutes we returned by the way we came, when what think you was my astonishment to see what I had not seen before, though I had passed close by it, a smart sun-dial mounted on a smart stone pedestal! I assure you it seemed the effect of conjuration. I stopped short, and exclaimed—"Why, here is a sun-dial, and upon our ground! How is this? Tell me, Sam, how it came here? Do you know any thing about it?" At first I really thought (that is to say, as soon as I could think at all) that this fac-totum of mine, Sam Roberts, having often heard me deplore the want of one, had given orders for the supply of that want himself, without my knowledge, and was half pleased and half offended. But he soon exculpated himself by imputing the fact to you. It was brought up to Weston (it seems) about noon: but Andrews stopped the cart at the blacksmith's, whence he sent to inquire if I was gone for my walk. As it happened, I walked not till two o'clock. So there it

stood waiting till I should go forth, and was introduced before my return. Fortunately too I went out at the church end of the village, and consequently saw nothing of it. How I could possibly pass it without seeing it, when it stood in the walk, I know not, but certain it is that I did. And where I shall fix it now, I know as little. It cannot stand between the two gates, the place of your choice, as I understand from Samuel, because the hay-cart must pass that way in the season. But we are now busy in winding the walk all round the orchard, and, in doing so, shall doubtless stumble at last upon some open spot that will suit it.

There it shall stand while I live, a constant monument of your kindness.

I have this moment finished the twelfth book of the Odyssey; and I read the Iliad to Mrs. Unwin every evening.

The effect of this reading is, that I still spy blemishes, something at least that I can mend; so that, after all, the transcript of alterations which you and George have made will not be a perfect one. It would be foolish to forego an opportunity of improvement for such a reason; neither will I. It is ten o'clock, and I must breakfast. Adieu, therefore, my dear Johnny! Remember your appointment to see us in October.

Ever yours,

W. C.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.

Weston, Sept. 8, 1793.

Non sum quod simulo, my dearest brother! I am cheerful upon paper sometimes, when I am absolutely the most dejected of all creatures. Desirous however to gain something myself by my own letters, unprofitable as they may and must be to my friends, I keep melancholy out of them as much as I can, that I may, if possible, by assuming a less gloomy air, deceive myself, and, by feigning with a continuance, improve the fiction into reality.

So you have seen Flaxman's figures, which I intended you should not have seen till I had spread them before you. How did you dare to look at them? You should have covered your eyes with both hands: I am charmed with Flaxman's Penelope, and though you don't deserve that I should, will send you a few lines, such as they are, with which she inspired me the other day while I was taking my noon-day walk.

> The suitors sinn'd, but with a fair excuse,
> Whom all this elegance might well seduce;
> Nor can our censure on the husband fall,
> Who, for a wife so lovely, slew them all.

I know not that you will meet any body here, when we see you in October, unless perhaps my Johnny should happen to be with us. If Tom is charmed with the thoughts of coming to Weston, we are equally so with the thoughts of seeing him

here. At his years I should hardly hope to make his visit agreeable to him, did I not know that he is of a temper and disposition that must make him happy every where. Give our love to him. If Romney can come with you, we have both room to receive him and hearts to make him most welcome.

W. C.

TO MRS. COURTENAY.

Weston, Sept. 15, 1793.

A thousand thanks, my dearest Catharina, for your pleasant letter; one of the pleasantest that I have received since your departure. You are very good to apologize for your delay, but I had not flattered myself with the hopes of a speedier answer. Knowing full well your talents for entertaining your friends who are present, I was sure you would with difficulty find half an hour that you could devote to an absent one.

I am glad that you think of your return. Poor Weston is a desolation without you. In the mean time I amuse myself as well as I can, thrumming old Homer's lyre, and turning the premises upside down. Upside down indeed, for so it is literally that I have been dealing with the orchard, almost ever since you went, digging and delving it around to make a new walk, which now begins to assume the shape of one, and to look as if some time or other it may serve in that capacity. Taking my usual exercise there the other day with Mrs. Unwin, a

wide disagreement between your clock and ours occasioned me to complain much, as I have often done, of the want of a dial. Guess my surprise, when at the close of my complaint I saw one—saw one close at my side; a smart one, glittering in the sun, and mounted on a pedestal of stone. I was astonished. "This," I exclaimed, "is absolute conjuration!"—It was a most mysterious affair, but the mystery was at last explained.

This scribble I presume will find you just arrived at Bucklands. I would with all my heart that since dials can be thus suddenly conjured from one place to another, I could be so too, and could start up before your eyes in the middle of some walk or lawn, where you and Lady Frog are wandering.

While Pitcairne whistles for his family estate in Fifeshire, he will do well if he will sound a few notes for me. I am originally of the same shire, and a family of my name is still there, to whom perhaps he may whistle on my behalf, not altogether in vain. So shall his fife excel all my poetical efforts, which have not yet, and I dare say never will, effectually charm one acre of ground into my possession.

Remember me to Sir John, Lady Frog, and your husband—tell them I love them all. She told me once she was jealous, now indeed she seems to have some reason, since to her I have not written, and have written twice to you. But bid her be of good courage, in due time I will give her proof of my constancy.

W. C.

TO THE REV. MR. JOHNSON.

Weston, Sept. 29, 1793.

My dear Johnny—You have done well to leave off visiting and being visited. Visits are insatiable devourers of time, and fit only for those who, if they did not that, would do nothing. The worst consequence of such departures from common practice is to be termed a singular sort of a fellow, or an odd fish; a sort of reproach that a man might be wise enough to contemn who had not half your understanding.

I look forward with pleasure to October the 11th, the day which I expect will be *albo notandus lapillo*, on account of your arrival here.

Here you will meet Mr. Rose, who comes on the 8th, and brings with him Mr. Lawrence, the painter, you may guess for what purpose. Lawrence returns when he has made his copy of me, but Mr. Rose will remain perhaps as long as you will. Hayley on the contrary will come, I suppose, just in time not to see you. Him we expect on the 20th. I trust, however, that thou wilt so order thy pastoral matters as to make thy stay here as long as possible.

Lady Hesketh, in her last letter, inquires very kindly after you, asks me for your address, and purposes soon to write to you. We hope to see her in November—so that, after a summer without company, we are likely to have an autumn and a winter sociable enough.

W. C.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.

Weston, Oct. 5, 1793.

My good intentions towards you, my dearest brother, are continually frustrated; and, which is most provoking, not by such engagements and avocations as have a right to my attention, such as those to my Mary and the old bard of Greece, but by mere impertinences, such as calls of civility from persons not very interesting to me, and letters from a distance still less interesting, because the writers of them are strangers. A man sent me a long copy of verses, which I could do no less than acknowledge. They were silly enough, and cost me eighteenpence, which was seventeenpence halfpenny farthing more than they were worth. Another sent me at the same time a plan, requesting my opinion of it, and that I would lend him my name as editor, a request with which I shall not comply, but I am obliged to tell him so, and one letter is all that I have time to dispatch in a day, sometimes half a one, and sometimes I am not able to write at all. Thus it is that my time perishes, and I can neither give so much of it as I would to you or to any other valuable purpose.

On Tuesday we expect company—Mr. Rose, and Lawrence the painter. Yet once more is my patience to be exercised, and once more I am made to wish that my face had been moveable, to put on and take off at pleasure, so as to be portable in a band-box, and sent to the artist. These however

will be gone, as I believe I told you, before you arrive, at which time I know not that any body will be here, except my Johnny, whose presence will not at all interfere with our readings—you will not, I believe, find me a very slashing critic—I hardly indeed expect to find any thing in your Life of Milton that I shall sentence to amputation. How should it be too long? A well-written work, sensible and spirited, such as yours was, when I saw it, is never so. But, however, we shall see. I promise to spare nothing that I think may be lopped off with advantage.

I began this letter yesterday, but could not finish it till now. I have risen this morning like an infernal frog out of Acheron, covered with the ooze and mud of melancholy. For this reason I am not sorry to find myself at the bottom of my paper, for had I more room perhaps I might fill it all with croaking, and make an heart-ache at Eartham, which I wish to be always cheerful. Adieu. My poor sympathising Mary is of course sad, but always mindful of you

W. C.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.

Weston, Oct. 18, 1793.

My dear Brother—I have not at present much that is necessary to say here, because I shall have the happiness of seeing you so soon; my time, according to custom, is a mere scrap, for which reason such must be my letter also.

You will find here more than I have hitherto given you reason to expect, but none who will not be happy to see you. These, however, stay with us but a short time, and will leave us in full possession of Weston on Wednesday next.

I look forward with joy to your coming, heartily wishing you a pleasant journey, in which my poor Mary joins me. Give our best love to Tom; without whom, after having been taught to look for him, we should feel our pleasure in the interview much diminished.

Læti expectamus te puerumque tuum.

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Weston, Oct. 22, 1793.

My dear Friend—You are very kind to apologize for a short letter, instead of reproaching me with having been so long entirely silent. I persuaded myself, however, that while you were on your journey you would miss me less as a correspondent than you do when you are at home, and therefore allowed myself to pursue my literary labours only, but still purposing to write as soon as I should have reason to judge you returned to London. Hindrances, however, to the execution even of that purpose, have interposed; and at this moment I write in the utmost haste, as indeed I always do, partly because I never begin a letter till I am

* Private Correspondence.

already fatigued with study, and partly through fear of interruption before I can possibly finish it.

I rejoice that you have travelled so much to your satisfaction. As to me, my travelling days, I believe, are over. Our journey of last year was less beneficial, both to Mrs. Unwin's health and my spirits, than I hoped it might be; and we are hardly rich enough to migrate in quest of pleasure merely.

I thank you much for your last publication, which I am reading, as fast as I can snatch opportunity, to Mrs. Unwin. We have found it, as far as we have gone, both interesting and amusing; and I never cease to wonder at the fertility of your invention, that, shut up as you were in your vessel, and disunited from the rest of mankind, could yet furnish you with such variety, and with the means, likewise, of saying the same thing in so many different ways.*

Sincerely yours,
W. C.

TO THE REV. J. JEKYLL RYE.

Weston, Nov. 3, 1793.

My dear Sir—Sensible as I am of your kindness in taking such a journey, at no very pleasant season, merely to serve a friend of mine, I cannot allow my thanks to sleep till I may have the pleasure of seeing you. I hope never to show myself unmind-

* The publication alluded to is entitled, "Letters to a Wife; written during three voyages to Africa, from 1750 to 1754. By the Author of Cardiphonia."

ful of so great a favour. Two lines which I received yesterday from Mr. Hurdis, written hastily on the day of decision, informed me that it was made in his favour, and by a majority of twenty.* I have great satisfaction in the event, and consequently hold myself indebted to all who at my instance have contributed to it.

You may depend on me for due attention to the honest clerk's request. When he called, it was not possible that I should answer your obliging letter, for he arrived here very early, and if I suffered any thing to interfere with my morning studies I should never accomplish my labours. Your hint concerning the subject for this year's copy is a very good one, and shall not be neglected.

I remain,

Sincerely yours,

W. C.

Hayley's second visit to Weston took place very soon after the date of the last letter. He found Cowper enlivened by the society of his young kinsman from Norfolk, and another of his favourite friends, Mr. Rose. The latter came recently from the seat of Lord Spencer, in Northamptonshire, commissioned to invite Cowper, and his guests, to Althorpe, where Gibbon, the historian, was making a visit of some continuance.

* He was appointed Professor of Poetry in the University of Oxford.

Cowper was strongly urged to accept this flattering invitation from a nobleman whom he cordially respected, and whose library alone might be regarded as a magnet of very powerful attraction. But the constitutional shyness of the poet, and the infirm state of Mrs. Unwin's health, conspired to prevent the meeting. It would have been curious to have contemplated the Poet of Christianity and the author of the celebrated sixteenth chapter in "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" placed in juxtaposition with each other. The reflection would not have escaped a pious observer how much happier, in the eye of wisdom, was the state of Cowper, clouded as it was by depression and sorrow, than that of the unbelieving philosopher, though in the zenith of his fame. We know it has been asserted that men are not answerable for their creed. Why then are the Jews a scattered people, the living witnesses of the truth of a divine Revelation and of the avenging justice of God? But scepticism can never justly be said to originate in want of evidence. Men doubt because they search after truth with the pride of the intellect, instead of seeking it with the simplicity of a little child, and that humility of spirit, by which only it is to be found.

TO MRS. COURTENAY.

Weston, Nov. 4, 1793.

I seldom rejoice in a day of soaking rain like

this, but in this, my dearest Catharina, I do rejoice sincerely, because it affords me an opportunity of writing to you, which, if fair weather had invited us into the orchard-walk at the usual hour, I should not easily have found. I am a most busy man, busy to a degree that sometimes half distracts me; but, if complete distraction be occasioned by having the thoughts too much and too long attached to a single point, I am in no danger of it, with such a perpetual whirl are mine whisked about from one subject to another. When two poets meet, there are fine doings I can assure you. My Homer finds work for Hayley, and his Life of Milton work for me, so that we are neither of us one moment idle. Poor Mrs. Unwin in the mean time sits quiet in her corner, occasionally laughing at us both, and not seldom interrupting us with some question or remark, for which she is constantly rewarded by me with a "Hush—hold your peace." Bless yourself, my dear Catharina, that you are not connected with a poet, especially that you have not two to deal with; ladies who have, may be bidden indeed to hold their peace, but very little peace have they. How should they in fact have any, continually enjoined as they are to be silent.

* * * * * *

The same fever that has been so epidemic there, has been severely felt here likewise; some have died, and a multitude have been in danger. Two under our own roof have been infected with it, and I am not sure that I have perfectly escaped myself, but I am now well again.

I have persuaded Hayley to stay a week longer, and again my hopes revive, that he may yet have an opportunity to know my friends before he returns into Sussex. I write amidst a chaos of interruptions: Hayley on one hand spouts Greek, and on the other hand Mrs. Unwin continues talking, sometimes to us, and sometimes, because we are both too busy to attend to her, she holds a dialogue with herself. Query, is not this a bull—and ought I not instead of dialogue to have said soliloquy?

Adieu! With our united love to all your party, and with ardent wishes soon to see you all at Weston, I remain, my dearest Catharina,

Ever yours,

W. C.

Though Cowper writes with apparent cheerfulness, yet Hayley, referring to this visit, remarks, "My fears for him, in every point of view, were alarmed by his present very singular condition. He possessed completely, at this period, all the admirable faculties of his mind, and all the native tenderness of his heart; but there was something indescribable in his appearance, which led me to apprehend that, without some signal event in his favour, to re-animate his spirits, they would gradually sink into hopeless dejection. The state of his aged infirm companion afforded additional ground for increasing solicitude. Her cheerful and beneficent spirit could hardly resist her own accumu-

lated maladies, so far as to preserve ability sufficient to watch over the tender health of him, whom she had watched and guarded so long."

Under these circumstances, Hayley, with an ardour of zeal and a regard for Cowper's welfare, that reflect the highest honour upon his character, determined on his return to London to interest his more powerful friends in his behalf, and thus secure, if possible, a timely provision against future difficulties. The necessity for this act of kindness will soon appear to be painfully urgent. In the mean time he cheered Cowper's mind, harassed by his Miltonic engagement, with intelligence that had a tendency to relieve him from much of his present embarrassment and dejection.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

Weston, Nov. 5, 1793.

My dear Friend—In a letter from Lady Hesketh, which I received not long since, she informed me how very pleasantly she had spent some time at Wargrave. We now begin to expect her here, where our charms of situation are perhaps not equal to yours, yet by no means contemptible. She told me she had spoken to you in very handsome terms of the country round about us, but not so of our house and the view before it. The house itself, however, is not unworthy some commendation; small as it is, it is neat, and neater than she is aware of; for my study and the room over it have

been repaired and beautified this summer, and little more was wanting to make it an abode sufficiently commodious for a man of my moderate desires. As to the prospect from it, that she misrepresented strangely, as I hope soon to have an opportunity to convince her by ocular demonstration. She told you, I know, of certain cottages opposite to us, or rather she described them as poor houses and hovels, that effectually blind our windows. But none such exist. On the contrary, the opposite object and the only one, is an orchard, so well planted, and with trees of such growth, that we seem to look into a wood, or rather to be surrounded by one. Thus, placed as we are in the midst of a village, we have none of those disagreeables that belong to such a position, and the village itself is one of the prettiest I know; terminated at one end by the church tower, seen through the trees, and at the other by a very handsome gateway, opening into a fine grove of elms, belonging to our neighbour Courtenay. How happy should I be to show it instead of describing it to you!

Adieu, my dear friend,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

Weston, Nov. 10, 1793.

My dear Friend—You are very kind to consider my literary engagements, and to make them a reason

for not interrupting me more frequently with a letter; but, though I am indeed as busy as an author or an editor can well be, and am not apt to be overjoyed at the arrival of letters from uninteresting quarters, I shall always, I hope, have leisure both to peruse and to answer those of my real friends, and to do both with pleasure.

I have to thank you much for your benevolent aid in the affair of my friend Hurdis. You have doubtless learned, ere now, that he has succeeded, and carried the prize by a majority of twenty. He is well qualified for the post he has gained. So much the better for the honour of the Oxonian laurel, and so much the more for the credit of those who have favoured him with their suffrages.

I am entirely of your mind respecting this conflagration by which all Europe suffers at present,* and is likely to suffer for a long time to come. The same mistake seems to have prevailed as in the American business. We then flattered ourselves that the colonies would prove an easy conquest, and, when all the neighbour nations armed themselves against France, we imagined, I believe, that she too would be presently vanquished. But we begin already to be undeceived, and God only knows to what a degree we may find we have erred at the conclusion. Such, however, is the state of things all around us, as reminds me continually of the Psalmist's expression—"*He shall break them in pieces like a potter's vessel.*" And I rather wish

* The effects of the French Revolution

than hope, in some of my melancholy moods, that England herself may escape a fracture.

I remain, truly yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. MR. HURDIS.

Weston, Nov. 24, 1793.

My dear Sir—Though my congratulations have been delayed, you have no friend, numerous as your friends are, who has more sincerely rejoiced in your success than I. It was no small mortification to me, to find that three out of the six whom I had engaged were not qualified to vote. You have prevailed, however, and by a considerable majority; there is, therefore, no room left for regret. When your short note arrived, which gave me the agreeable news of your victory, our friend of Eartham was with me, and shared largely in the joy that I felt on the occasion. He left me but a few days since, having spent somewhat more than a fortnight here; during which time we employed all our leisure hours in the revisal of his Life of Milton. It is now finished, and a very finished work it is; and one that will do great honour, I am persuaded, to the biographer, and the excellent man of injured memory, who is the subject of it. As to my own concern with the works of this first of poets, which has been long a matter of burthensome contemplation, I have the happiness to find at last that I am at liberty to postpone my labours. While I expected that my commentary would be called for

in the ensuing spring, I looked forward to the undertaking with dismay, not seeing a shadow of probability that I should be ready to answer the demand; for this ultimate revisal of my Homer, together with the notes, occupies completely at present (and will for some time longer) all the little leisure that I have for study—leisure which I gain at this season of the year by rising long before daylight.

You are now become a nearer neighbour, and, as your professorship, I hope, will not engross you wholly, will find an opportunity to give me your company at Weston. Let me hear from you soon; tell me how you like your new office, and whether you perform the duties of it with pleasure to yourself. With much pleasure to others you will, I doubt not, and with equal advantage.

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

Weston, Nov. 29, 1793.

My dear Friend—I have risen, while the owls are still hooting, to pursue my accustomed labours in the mine of Homer; but, before I enter upon them, shall give the first moment of daylight to the purpose of thanking you for your last letter, containing many pleasant articles of intelligence, with nothing to abate the pleasantness of them, except the single circumstance that we are not likely to see you here so soon as I expected. My hope was, that the first frost would bring you and the amiable

painter with you.* If, however, you are prevented by the business of your respective professions, you are well prevented, and I will endeavour to be patient. When the latter was here, he mentioned one day the subject of Diomede's horses, driven under the axle of his chariot by the thunderbolt which fell at their feet, as a subject for his pencil.† It is certainly a noble one, and therefore worthy of his study and attention. It occurred to me at the moment, but I know not what it was that made me forget it again the next moment, that the horses of Achilles flying over the foss, with Patroclus and Automedon in the chariot, would be a good companion for it.‡ Should you happen to recollect this, when you next see him, you may submit it, if you please, to his consideration. I stumbled yesterday on another subject, which reminded me of said excellent artist, as likely to afford a fine opportunity to the expression that he could give it. It is found in the shooting match in the twenty-third book of the Iliad, between Meriones and Teucer. The former cuts the string with which the dove is tied to the mast-head, and sets her at liberty;

* Lawrence.

† He, thund'ring downward hurl'd his candent bolt
To the horse-feet of Diomede: dire fum'd
The flaming sulphur, and both horses drove
Under the axle.—
Cowper's Version, book viii.

‡ Right o'er the hollow foss the coursers leap'd,
By the immortal gods to Peleus given.—
Cowper's Version, book xvi.

the latter, standing at his side, in all the eagerness of emulation, points an arrow at the mark with his right hand, while with his left he snatches the bow from his competitor: he is a fine poetical figure, but Mr. Lawrence himself must judge whether or not he promises as well for the canvas.*

He does great honour to my physiognomy by his intention to get it engraved, and, though I think I foresee that this *private publication* will grow in time into a publication of absolute publicity, I find it impossible to be dissatisfied with any thing that seems eligible both to him and you. To say the truth, when a man has once turned his mind inside out for the inspection of all who choose to inspect it, to make a secret of his face seems but little better than a self-contradiction. At the same time, however, I shall be best pleased if it be kept, according to your intentions, as a rarity.

* Cowper here inverts the order of the names, and attributes to Teucer, what in the original is ascribed to Meriones.

> At once Meriones withdrew the bow
> From Teucer's hand, but held the shaft the while,
> Already aim'd. . . . . .
> He ey'd the dove aloft beneath a cloud,
> And struck her circling high in air; the shaft
> Pass'd through her, and, returning, pierc'd the soil
> Before the foot of brave Meriones.
> She, perching on the mast again, her head
> Reclin'd, and hung her wide-unfolded wing;
> But, soon expiring, dropp'd and fell remote.

The concluding lines of this passage convey a beautiful and *affecting* image.

I have lost Hayley, and begin to be uneasy at not hearing from him; tell me about him when you write.

I should be happy to have a work of mine embellished by Lawrence, and made a companion for a work of Hayley's. It is an event to which I look forward with the utmost complacence. I cannot tell you what a relief I feel it not to be pressed for Milton.

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

Weston, Dec. 8, 1793.

My dear Friend—In my last I forgot to thank you for the box of books, containing also the pamphlets. We have read, that is to say, my Cousin has, who reads to us in an evening, the history of Jonathan Wild;* and found it highly entertaining. The satire on great men is witty, and I believe perfectly just: we have no censure to pass on it, unless that we think the character of Mrs. Heartfree not well sustained; not quite delicate in the latter part of it; and that the constant effect of her charms upon every man who sees her has a sameness in it that is tiresome, and betrays either much carelessness, or idleness, or lack of invention. It is possible, indeed, that the author might intend by this circumstance, a satirical glance at novelists, whose heroines are generally all bewitching; but it

* A production of Fielding's.

is a fault that he had better have noticed in another manner, and not have exemplified in his own.

The first volume of *Man as he is* has lain unread in my study window this twelvemonth, and would have been returned unread to its owner, had not my Cousin come in good time to save it from that disgrace. We are now reading it, and find it excellent; abounding with wit and just sentiment, and knowledge both of books and men.

Adieu!

W. C.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.

Weston, Dec. 8, 1795.

I have waited, and waited impatiently, for a line from you, and am at last determined to send you one, to inquire what is become of you, and why you are silent so much longer than usual.

I want to know many things, which only you can tell me, but especially I want to know what has been the issue of your conference with Nichol: has he seen your work?* I am impatient for the appearance of it, because impatient to have the spotless credit of the great poet's character, as a man and a citizen, vindicated, as it ought to be, and as it never will be again.

It is a great relief to me, that my Miltonic labours are suspended. I am now busy in transcrib-

* Hayley's Life of Milton.

ing the alterations of Homer, having finished the whole revisal. I must then write a new Preface, which done I shall endeavour immediately to descant on *The Four Ages.*

Adieu! my dear Brother,

W. C.

The Miltonic labours of Cowper were not only suspended at this time, but we lament to say never resumed.

There is a period, in the history of men of letters, when the mind begins to shrink from the toil and responsibility of a great undertaking, and to feel the necessity of contracting its exertions within limits more suited to its diminished powers. Physical and moral causes are often found to co-operate in hastening this crisis. The sensibilities that are inseparable from genius, the ardour that consumes itself by its own fires, the labour of thought, and the inadequacy of the body to sustain the energies of the soul within—these often unite in harassing the spirits, and sowing the seeds of a premature decay. Such was now the case with Cowper. His literary exertions had been too unremitting, and though we must allow much to the influence of his unhappy malady, and to the illness of Mrs. Unwin, yet there can be no doubt that his long and laborious habits of study had no small share in undermining his constitution.

It seems desirable therefore, at this period, to refer to the intended edition of Milton, and briefly to state the result of his labours.

The design is thus stated by Cowper himself, in one of his letters. "A Milton, that is to rival, and if possible to exceed in splendour, Boydell's Shakspeare, is in contemplation, and I am in the Editor's office. Fuseli is the painter. My business will be to select notes from others, and to write original notes; to translate the Latin and Italian poems, and to give a correct text."

All that he was enabled to accomplish of this important undertaking was as follows:

He commenced the series of his translations about the middle of September, 1791. In February, 1792, he had completed all his Latin pieces, and shortly after he finished the Italian. While at Eartham, in August, he revised all his translations, and they were subsequently retouched, in his declining strength, at East Dereham. From an amiable desire to avoid what might create irritation, he omitted the Poems against the Catholics, and thus assigned his motives in a letter to Johnson.

Weston, Oct. 30, 1791

"We and the Papists are at present on amicable terms. They have behaved themselves peaceably many years, and have lately received favours from Government. I should think therefore, that the dying embers of ancient animosity had better not be troubled."

He also omitted a few of the minuter poems, as not worthy of being ranked with the rest.

He was assisted in the execution of this work

by the Adamo of Andreini, Bentley's Milton, an interleaved copy of Newton's, and Warton's edition of the minor poems.

With respect to his critical labours, he proceeded with singular slowness and difficulty. It appears to have been a most oppressive burden on his spirits. "Milton especially," he observes, "is my grievance; and I might almost as well be haunted by his ghost as goaded with continual reproaches for neglecting him." He was always soliciting more time, and when the appointed period was expired, he renewed his application for fresh delay. His commentary is restricted to the three first books of the Paradise Lost.

This seems to imply that however nature designed him to be a poet, she denied the qualifications necessary to constitute the critic; for it will generally be found, that to execute with delight and ease is the attribute of genius, and the evidence of natural impulse; and that slowness of performance indicates the want of those powers that afford the promise and pledge of success.

In this unfinished state, the work was published by Hayley, in the year 1808, for the benefit of the second son of Mr. Rose, the godchild of Cowper. Some designs in outline were furnished by Flaxman, highly characteristic of his graceful style.

The translations are a perfect model of beautiful and elegant versification.

We consider Milton's address to his father to be

one of the most beautiful compositions extant, and rejoice in presenting it to the reader in an English form, so worthy of the original Latin poem.

TO HIS FATHER.

Oh that Pieria's spring would thro' my breast
Pour its inspiring influence, and rush,
No rill, but rather an o'erflowing flood!
That for my venerable father's sake
All meaner themes renounc'd, my muse, on wings
Of duty borne, might reach a loftier strain.
For thee, my father! howsoe'er it please,
She frames this slender work, nor know I aught,
That may thy gifts more suitably requite;
Though to requite them suitably would ask
Returns much nobler, and surpassing far
The meagre stores of verbal gratitude:
But, such as I possess, I send thee all.
This page presents thee in their full amount
With thy son's treasures, and the sum is nought:
Nought, save the riches that from airy dream
In secret grottoes, and in laurel bow'rs,
I have, by golden Clio's gift, acquir'd.

He then sings the praises of song in the following animated strain.

Verse is a work divine; despise not thou
Verse therefore, which evinces (nothing more)
Man's heavenly source, and which, retaining still
Some scintillations of Promethean fire,
Bespeaks him animated from above.
The Gods love verse; the infernal Pow'rs themselves
Confess the influence of verse, which stirs
The lowest deep, and binds in triple chains
Of adamant both Pluto and the shades.
In verse the Delphic priestess, and the pale

Tremulous Sybil, make the future known,
And he who sacrifices, on the shrine
Hangs verse, both when he smites the threat'ning bull,
And when he spreads his reeking entrails wide
To scrutinize the Fates envelop'd there.

He anticipates it as one of the employments of glorified spirits in heaven.

We too, ourselves, what time we seek again
Our native skies, and one eternal Now*
Shall be the only measure of our being,
Crown'd all with gold, and chanting to the lyre
Harmonious verse, shall range the courts above,
And make the starry firmament resound.

The sympathy existing between the two kindred studies of poetry and music is described with happy effect.

Now say, what wonder is it, if a son
Of thine delight in verse, if so conjoin'd
In close affinity, we sympathize
In social arts, and kindred studies sweet?
Such distribution of himself to us
Was Phœbus' choice; thou hast thy gift,† and I
Mine also, and between us we receive,
Father and son, the whole inspiring God.

The following effusion of filial feeling is as honourable to the discernment and liberality of the parent, as it is expressive of the gratitude of the son.

. . . . . Thou never bad'st me tread
The beaten path and broad, that leads right on

* The same expression is used by Cowley:
" Nothing is there to come, and nothing past.
But an eternal Now does always last."

† Milton's father was well skilled in music.

To opulence, nor did'st condemn thy son
To the insipid clamours of the bar,
To laws voluminous and ill observ'd;
But, wishing to enrich me more, to fill
My mind with treasure, led'st me far away
From city-din to deep retreats, to banks
And streams Aonian, and, with free consent,
Did'st place me happy at Apollo's side.
I speak not now, on more important themes
Intent, of common benefits, and such
As nature bids, but of thy larger gifts,
My father! who, when I had open'd once
The stores of Roman rhetoric, and learn'd
The full-ton'd language of the eloquent Greeks,
Whose lofty music grac'd the lips of Jove,
Thyself did'st counsel me to add the flow'rs,
That Gallia boasts, those too, with which the smooth
Italian his degen'rate speech adorns,
That witnesses his mixture with the Goth;
And Palestine's prophetic songs divine.

We delight in witnessing the exuberance manly and generous feeling in a son towards parent, entitled by kind offices to his gratitud and therefore transcribe the following passage.

Go now, and gather dross, ye sordid minds,
That covet it; what could my father more?
What more could Jove himself, unless he gave
His own abode, the heaven in which he reigns?
More eligible gifts than these were not
Apollo's to his son, had they been safe,
As they were insecure, who made the boy
The world's vice-luminary, bade him rule
The radiant chariot of the day, and bind
To his young brows his own all-dazzling wreath.
I therefore, although last and least my place
Among the learned, in the laurel grove

Will hold, and where the conqu'ror's ivy twines,
Henceforth exempt from the unletter'd throng
Profane, nor even to be seen by such.
Away then, sleepless Care, Complaint, away!
And Envy, with thy "jealous leer malign!"
Nor let the monster Calumny shoot forth
Her venom'd tongue at me. Detested foes!
Ye all are impotent against my peace,
For I am privileg'd, and bear my breast
Safe, and too high for your viperean wound.

He thus beautifully concludes this affecting tribute of filial gratitude.

But thou, my father! since to render thanks
Equivalent, and to requite by deeds
Thy liberality, exceeds my power,
Suffice it, that I thus record thy gifts,
And bear them treasur'd in a grateful mind!
Ye too, the favourite pastime of my youth,
My voluntary numbers, if ye dare
To hope longevity, and to survive
Your master's funeral, not soon absorb'd
In the oblivious Lethæan gulf,
Shall to futurity perhaps convey
This theme, and by these praises of my sire
Improve the fathers of a distant age!

We subjoin Hayley's remark on this poem, in Cowper's edition of Milton.

"These verses are founded on one of the most interesting subjects that language can display, the warmth and felicity of strong reciprocal kindness between a father and a son, not only united by the most sacred tie of nature, but still more endeared to each other by the happy cultivation of honour-

able and congenial arts. The sublime description of poetry, and the noble and graceful portrait, which the author here exhibits of his own mental character, may be said to render this splendid poem the prime jewel in a coronet of variegated gems."

We extract the following passages from the remarks and notes in Cowper's Milton, as exhibiting the manner in which he executed this portion of his labours.

BOOK I.

"There is a solemnity of sentiment, as well as majesty of numbers, in the exordium of this noble poem, which in the works of the ancients has no example.

"The sublimest of all subjects was reserved for Milton, and, bringing to the contemplation of that subject not only a genius equal to the best of theirs, but a heart also deeply impregnated with the divine truths which lay before him, it is no wonder that he has produced a composition, on the whole, superior to any that we have received from former ages. But he who addresses himself to the perusal of this work with a mind entirely unaccustomed to serious and spiritual contemplation, unacquainted with the word of God, or prejudiced against it, is ill-qualified to appreciate the value of a poem built upon it, or to taste its beauties. Milton is the poet of Christians: an infidel may have an ear for the harmony of his numbers, may be aware of the dignity of his expression, and in some degree of the sublimity of his conceptions; but the unaffected and masculine

piety, which was his true inspirer, and is the very soul of his poem, he will either not perceive, or it will offend him."

To bellow through the vast and boundless deep.
Line 177.

"In this we seem to hear a thunder suited both to the scene and the occasion, incomparably more awful than any ever heard on earth, and the *thunder winged with lightning* is highly poetical. It may be observed here, that the thunder of Milton is not hurled from the hand like Homer's, but discharged like an arrow. Thus in book vi. line 712, the Father, ordering forth the Son for the destruction of the rebel angels, says—

. . . . . Bring forth all my war,
My bow, and thunder.

As if, jealous for the honour of the true God, the poet disdained to arm him like the God of the heathen."*

He spake, and to confirm his words, &c. &c.
Line 663.

"This is another instance in which appears the advantage that Milton derives from the grandeur of his subject. What description could even he have given of a host of human warriors insulting their conqueror, at all comparable to this? First, their multitude is to be noticed. They are not thousands but millions; and they are millions, not

* Psalm vii. 12.

of puny mortals, but of mighty cherubim. Their swords flame, not metaphorically, but they are swords of fire; they flash not by reflection of the sunbeams, like the swords of Homer, but by their own light, and that light plays not idly in the broad day, but far round illumines Hell. And lastly, they defy not a created being like themselves, but the Almighty."

BOOK II.

As when from mountain tops, &c.

Line 488.

"The reader loses half the beauty of this charming simile, who does not give particular attention to the numbers. There is a majesty in them not often equalled, and never surpassed even by this great poet himself; the movement is uncommonly slow; an effect produced by means already hinted at, the assemblage of a greater proportion of long syllables than usual. The pauses are also managed with great skill and judgment; while the clouds rise, and the heavens gather blackness, they fall in those parts of the verse, where they retard the reader most, and thus become expressive of the solemnity of the subject; but in the latter part of the simile, when the sun breaks out, and the scene brightens, they are so disposed as to allow the verse an easier and less interrupted flow, more suited to the cheerfulness of the occasion."

He concludes with the following summary of the great doctrines that form the foundation of the Paradise Lost.

"It may not be amiss, at the close of these ad-

mirable speeches—as admirable for their sound divinity as for the perspicuity with which it is expressed—to allow ourselves a moment's pause, for the purpose of taking a short retrospect of the doctrines contained in them. Man, in the beginning, is placed in a probationary state, and made the arbiter of his own destiny. By his own fault, he forfeits happiness, both for himself and his descendants. But mercy interposes for his restoration. That mercy is represented as perfectly free, as vouchsafed to the most unworthy; to creatures so entirely dead in sin as to be destitute even of a sense of their need of it, and consequently too stupid even to ask it. They are also as poor as they are unfeeling; and, were it possible that they could affect themselves with a just sense and apprehension of their lapsed condition, they would have no compensation to offer to their offended Maker, nothing with which they can satisfy the demands of his justice,—in short, no atonement. In this ruinous state of their affairs, and when all hope of reconciliation seems lost for ever, the Son of God voluntarily undertakes for them,—undertakes to become the son of man also, and to suffer, in man's stead, the penalty annexed to his transgression. In consequence of this self-substitution, Christ becomes the federal head of his church, and the sole author of salvation to his people. As Adam's sin was imputed to his posterity, so the faultless obedience of the second Adam is imputed to all, who, in the great concern of justification, shall renounce their own obedience as imperfect

and therefore incompetent. The sentence is thus reversed as to all believers: "Death is swallowed up in victory." The Saviour presents the redeemed before the throne of the Eternal Father, in whose countenance no longer any symptom of displeasure appears against them, but their joy and peace are thenceforth perfect. The general resurrection takes place; the saints are made assessors with Christ in the judgment both of men and angels; the new heaven and earth, the destined habitation of the just, succeed; the Son of God, his whole undertaking accomplished, surrenders the kingdom to his Father: God becomes all in all! It is easy to see, that, among these doctrines, there are some which, in modern times, have been charged with novelty; but how new they are Milton is a witness."

Fuseli, whose labours were so unfortunately superseded, completed a series of admirable paintings from subjects furnished by the Paradise Lost; which were afterwards exhibited in London, under the name of the Milton Gallery. He thus acquired a reputation which placed him in the first rank of artists; and the amateur had the opportunity of seeing, in the Shakspeare and Milton galleries, the most distinguished painters engaged in illustrating the productions of the two greatest authors that ever adorned any age or country.*

* A popular writer paid the following eloquent tribute to these masterly specimens of professional art.

Yet mark each willing Muse, where Boydell draws,
And calls the sister pow'rs in Shakspeare's cause!

This projected edition of Milton is remarkable as having laid the foundation of the intercourse, which soon ripened into friendship, between Cowper and Hayley. The latter was at that time engaged in writing a life of Milton, which gave rise to his being represented as an opponent of Cowper. To exonerate himself from such an imputation, he wrote the letter which we subjoin in a note.*

By art controll'd the fire of Reynolds breaks,
And nature's pathos in her Northcote speaks;
The Grecian forms in Hamilton combine,
Parrhasian grace and Zeuxis' softest line;
There Barry's learning meets with Romney's strength,
And Smirke portrays Thalia at full length.

Lo! Fuseli (in whose tempestuous soul,
The unnavigable tides of genius roll,)
Depicts the sulph'rous fire, the smould'ring light,
The bridge chaotic o'er the abyss of night,
With each accursed form and mystic spell,
And singly "bears up all the fame of hell!"

Pursuits of Literature.

*Eartham, Feb. 1792.

Dear Sir—I have often been tempted, by affectionate admiration of your poetry, to trouble you with a letter; but I have repeatedly checked myself in recollecting that the vanity of believing ourselves distantly related in spirit to a man of genius is but a sorry apology for intruding on his time.

Though I resisted my desire of professing myself your friend, that I might not disturb you with intrusive familiarity, I cannot resist a desire, equally affectionate, of disclaiming an idea which I am told is imputed to me, of considering myself, on a recent occasion, as an antagonist to you. Allow me, therefore, to say, I was solicited to write a Life of Milton, for Boydell and Nichol, before I had the least idea that you and

Having detailed the circumstances connected with the edition of Milton, we return to the regular correspondence.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.*

Weston, Dec. 10. 1793.

You mentioned, my dear friend, in your last letter, an unfavourable sprain that you had received, Mr. Fuseli were concerned in a project similar to theirs. When I first heard of your intention, I was apprehensive that we might undesignedly thwart each other; but, on seeing your proposals, I am agreeably persuaded that our respective labours will be far from clashing; as it is your design to illustrate Milton with a series of notes, and I only mean to execute a more candid life of him than his late biographer has given us, upon a plan that will, I flatter myself, be particularly pleasing to those who love the author as we do.

As to the pecuniary interest of those persons who venture large sums in expensive decoration of Milton, I am persuaded his expanding glory will support them all. Every splendid edition, where the merits of the pencil are in any degree worthy of the poet, will, I think, be secure of success. I wish it cordially to all; as I have great affection for the arts, and a sincere regard for those whose talents reflect honour upon them.

To you, my dear Sir, I have a grateful attachment, for the infinite delight which your writings have afforded me; and if, in the course of your work, I have any opportunity to serve or oblige you, I shall seize it with that friendly spirit which has impelled me at present to assure you, both in prose and rhyme, that I am your cordial admirer,

W. HAYLEY.

P.S. I wrote the enclosed sonnet on being told that our names had been idly printed together, in a newspaper, as

* Private Correspondence.

which you apprehended might be very inconvenient to you for some time to come; and having learned also from Lady Hesketh the same unwelcome intelligence, in terms still more alarming than those in which you related the accident yourself, I cannot but be anxious, as well as my cousin, to know the present state of it; and shall truly rejoice to hear

hostile competitors. Pray forgive its partial defects for its affectionate sincerity. From my ignorance of your address, I send this to your bookseller's by a person commissioned to place my name in the list of your subscribers; and let me add, if you ever wish to form a new collection of names for any similar purpose, I entreat you to honour me so far as to rank *mine,* of your own accord, among those of your sincerest friends. Adieu!

SONNET

TO WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ.

On hearing that our names had been idly mentioned in a newspaper, as competitors in a Life of Milton.

Cowper! delight of all who justly prize
The splendid magic of a strain divine,
That sweetly tempts th' enlighten'd soul to rise,
As sunbeams lure an eagle to the skies.
Poet! to whom I feel my heart incline
As to a friend endear'd by virtue's ties;
Ne'er shall my name in pride's contentious line
With hostile emulation cope with thine!
No, let us meet, with kind fraternal aim,
Where Milton's shrine invites a votive throng.
With thee I share a passion for his fame,
His zeal for truth, his scorn of venal blame:
But thou hast rarer gifts,—to thee belong
His harp *of highest tone,* his sanctity of song.

that it is in a state of recovery. Give us a line of information on this subject, as soon as you can conveniently, and you will much oblige us.

I write by morning candle-light; my literary business obliging me to be an early riser. Homer demands me: finished, indeed, but the alterations not transcribed · a work to which I am now hastening as fast as possible. The transcript ended, which is likely to amount to a good sizeable volume, I must write a new preface; and then farewell to Homer for ever! And if the remainder of my days be a little gilded with the profits of this long and laborious work, I shall not regret the time that I have bestowed on it.

I remain, my dear friend,
Affectionately yours,
W. C.

Can you give us any news of Lord Howe's Armada; concerning which we may inquire, as our forefathers did of the Spanish,—"an in cœlum sublata sit, an in Tartarum depressa?" *

* Lord Howe was at this time in pursuit of the French fleet, and absent six weeks, during which the public received no intelligence of his movements. His lordship at length returned, having only seen the enemy, but without having been able to overtake and bring them to action. Though this furnished no argument against him, but rather showed the terror that he inspired, yet some of the wits of the day wrote the following *jeu d'esprit* on the occasion.

When Cæsar triumph'd o'er his Gallic foes,
Three words concise,† his gallant acts disclose;

† Veni, vidi, vici. I came, I saw, I conquered.

The reader may now be anxious to learn some particulars of the projected poem, which has been repeatedly mentioned under the title of *The Four Ages;* a poem to which the mind of Cowper looked eagerly forward, as to a new and highly promising field for his excursive fancy. The idea had been suggested to him in the year 1791, by his clerical neighbour, Mr. Buchanan, of Ravenstone, a small sequestered village within the distance of an easy walk from Weston. This gentleman, who had occasionally enjoyed the gratification of visiting Cowper, suggested to him, with a becoming diffidence, the project of a new poem on the four distinct periods of life—infancy, youth, manhood, and old age. He imparted his ideas to the poet by a letter, in which he observed, with equal modesty and truth, that Cowper was particularly qualified to relish, and to do justice to the subject; a subject which he supposed not hitherto treated expressly, as its importance deserved, by any poet ancient or modern.

Mr. Buchanan added to this letter a brief sketch of contents for the projected composition. This hasty sketch he enlarged, at the request of Cowper. How the poet appreciated the suggestion will appear from the following billet.

But Howe more brief comprises his in *one*,
And *vidi* tells us all that he has done.

Lord Howe subsequently proved his claim to the whole of this celebrated dispatch of Cæsar, by the great victory which he gained off Ushant over the French fleet, June 1, 1794; a victory which forms one of the brightest triumphs of the British navy.

TO THE REV. MR. BUCHANAN.

Weston, May 11, 1793.

My dear Sir—You have sent me a beautiful poem, wanting nothing but metre. I would to heaven that you would give it that requisite yourself; for he who could make the sketch, cannot but be well qualified to finish. But if you will not, I will; provided always nevertheless, that God gives me ability, for it will require no common share to do justice to your conceptions.

I am much yours,

W. C.

Your little messenger vanished before I could catch him.

This work, in his first conception of it, was greatly endeared to him, but he soon entertained an apprehension that he should never accomplish it. Writing to his friend of St. Paul's in 1793, the poet said—"*The Four Ages* is a subject that delights me when I think of it; but I am ready to fear, that all my ages will be exhausted before I shall be at leisure to write upon it."

A fragment is all that he has left, for which we refer the reader to the Poems. In his happier days, it would have been expanded in a manner more commensurate with the copiousness of the subject, and the poetical powers of the author.

It may be interesting to add, that a modern poem

on the Four Ages of Man was written by M. Werthnuller, a citizen of Zurich, and translated into Latin verse, by Dr. Olstrochi, librarian to the Ambrosian library at Milan. This performance gave rise to another German poem on the Four Ages of Woman, by M. Zacharie, professor of poetry at Brunswick.

The increasing infirmities of Cowper's aged companion, Mrs. Unwin, his filial solicitude to alleviate her sufferings, and the gathering clouds of deeper despondency that began to settle on his mind, in the first month of the year 1794, not only rendered it impossible for him to advance in any great original performance, but, to use his own expressive words, in the close of his correspondence with his highly-valued friend, Mr. Rose, made all composition either of poetry or prose impracticable. Writing to that friend in January 1794, he says, "I have just ability enough to transcribe, which is all that I have to do at present: God knows that I write, at this moment, under the pressure of sadness not to be described."

It was a spectacle that might awaken compassion in the sternest of human characters, to see the health, the comfort, and the little fortune of a man, so distinguished by intellectual endowments, and by moral excellence, perishing most deplorably. A sight so affecting made many friends of Cowper solicitous and importunate that his declining life should be honourably protected by public munificence. Men of all parties agreed that a pension might be granted to an author of his acknowledged merit, with graceful propriety.

But such is the difficulty of doing real good, experienced even by the great and powerful, or so apt are statesmen to forget the pressing exigence of meritorious individuals, in the distractions of official perplexity, that month after month elapsed, without the accomplishment of so desirable an object.

Imagination can hardly devise any human condition more truly affecting than the state of the poet at this period. His generous and faithful guardian, Mrs. Unwin, who had preserved him through seasons of the severest calamity, was now, with her faculties and fortune impaired, sinking fast into second childhood. The distress of heart that he felt in beholding the afflicting change in a companion so justly dear to him, conspiring with his constitutional melancholy, was gradually undermining the exquisite faculties of his mind. The disinterested and affectionate kindness of Lady Hesketh, at this crisis, deserves to be recorded in terms of the highest commendation. With a magnanimity of feeling to which it is difficult to do justice, and to the visible detriment of her health, she nobly devoted herself to the superintendence of a house, whose two interesting inhabitants were almost incapacitated from attending to the ordinary offices of life. Those only who have lived with the superannuated and the melancholy, can properly appreciate the value of such a sacrifice.

The two last of Cowper's letters to Hayley, that breathe a spirit of mental activity and cheerful friendship, were written in the close of the year 1793, and in the beginning of the next. They arose

from an incident that it may be proper to relate, before we insert them.

On Hayley's return from Weston, he had given an account of the poet to his old friend, Lord Thurlow. That learned and powerful critic, in speaking of Cowper's Homer, declared himself not satisfied with his version of Hector's admirable prayer in caressing his child. Both ventured on new translations of this prayer, which were immediately sent to Cowper, and the following letters will prove with what just and manly freedom of spirit he was at this time able to criticize the composition of his friends, and his own.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.

Weston, Dec. 17, 1793.

Oh, Jove! and all ye Gods! grant this my son
To prove, like me, pre-eminent in Troy!
In valour such, and firmness of command!
Be he extoll'd, when he returns from fight,
As far his sire's superior! may he slay
His enemy, bring home his gory spoils,
And may his mother's heart o'erflow with joy!

I rose this morning, at six o'clock, on purpose to translate this prayer again, and to write to my dear brother. Here you have it, such as it is, not perfectly according to my own liking, but as well as I could make it, and I think better than either yours or Lord Thurlow's. You with your six lines have made yourself stiff and ungraceful, and he with his seven has produced as good prose as heart can wish,

but no poetry at all. A scrupulous attention to the letter has spoiled you both; you have neither the spirit nor the manner of Homer. A portion of both may be found, I believe, in my version, but not so much as I could wish—it is better however than the printed one. His lordship's two first lines I cannot very well understand; he seems to me to give a sense to the original that does not belong to it. Hector, I apprehend, does not say, 'Grant that he may prove himself my son, and be eminent," &c.—but " grant that this my son may prove eminent"—— which is a material difference. In the latter sense I find the simplicity of an ancient; in the former, that is to say, in the notion of a man proving himself his father's son by similar merit, the finesse and dexterity of a modern. His lordship too makes the man, who gives the young hero his commendation, the person who returns from battle; whereas Homer makes the young hero himself that person, at least if Clarke is a just interpreter, which I suppose is hardly to be disputed.

If my old friend would look into my Preface, he would find a principle laid down there, which perhaps it would not be easy to invalidate, and which properly attended to would equally secure a translation from stiffness and from wildness. The principle I mean is this—" Close, but not so close as to be servile! free, but not so free as to be licentious!" A superstitious fidelity loses the spirit, and a loose deviation the sense of the translated author——a happy moderation in either case is the only possible way of preserving both.

Thus have I disciplined you both, and now, if you please, you may both discipline me. I shall not enter my version in my book till it has undergone your strictures at least, and, should you write to the noble critic again, you are welcome to submit it to his. We are three awkward fellows indeed, if we cannot amongst us make a tolerable good translation of six lines of Homer.

Adieu!

W. C.

TO WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.

Weston, Jan. 5, 1794.

My dear Hayley—I have waited, but waited in vain, for a propitious moment when I might give my old friend's objections the consideration they deserve; I shall at last be forced to send a vague answer, unworthy to be sent to a person accustomed, like him, to close reasoning and abstruse discussion; for I rise after ill rest, and with a frame of mind perfectly unsuited to the occasion. I sit too at the window for light's sake, where I am so cold that my pen slips out of my fingers. First, I will give you a translation *de novo*, of this untranslateable prayer. It is shaped as nearly as I could contrive to his lordship's ideas, but I have little hope that it will satisfy him.

Grant Jove, and all ye Gods, that this my son,
Be, as myself have been, illustrious here!
A valiant man! and let him reign in Troy!
May all who witness his return from fight
Hereafter, say——he far excels his sire;

> And let him bring back gory trophies, stript
> From foes slain by him, to his mother's joy.

Imlac in Rasselas says—I forget to whom, "You have convinced me that it is impossible to be a poet." In like manner I might say to his lordship, you have convinced me that it is impossible to be a translator; to be a translator, on his terms at least, is I am sure impossible. On his terms, I would defy Homer himself, were he alive, to translate the Paradise Lost into Greek. Yet Milton had Homer much in his eye when he composed that poem; whereas Homer never thought of me or my translation. There are minutiæ in every language, which, transfused into another, will spoil the version. Such extreme fidelity is in fact unfaithful. Such close resemblance takes away all likeness. The original is elegant, easy, natural; the copy is clumsy, constrained, unnatural: to what is this owing? To the adoption of terms not congenial to your purpose, and of a context, such as no man writing an original work would make use of. Homer is every thing that a poets hould be. A translation of Homer, so made, will be every thing a translation of Homer should not be; because it will be written in no anguage under heaven. It will be English, and it will be Greek, and therefore it will be neither. He is the man, whoever he be, (I do not pretend to be that man myself,) he is the man best qualified as a translator of Homer, who has drenched, and steeped, and soaked himself in the effusions of his genius, till he has imbibed their colour to the bone, and who, when he is thus dyed through and through, distinguishing between what is essentially Greek,

and what may be habited in English, rejects the former, and is faithful to the latter, as far as the purposes of fine poetry will permit and no farther: this, I think, may be easily proved. Homer is everywhere remarkable either for ease, dignity, or energy of expression; for grandeur of conception, and a majestic flow of numbers. If we copy him so closely as to make every one of these excellent properties of his absolutely unattainable, which will certainly be the effect of too close a copy, instead of translating, we murder him. Therefore, after all his lordship has said, I still hold freedom to be an indispensable—freedom, I mean, with respect to the expression; freedom so limited, as never to leave behind the *matter;* but at the same time indulged with a sufficient scope to secure the spirit, and as much as possible of the manner. I say as much as possible, because an English manner must differ from a Greek one, in order to be graceful, and for this there is no remedy. Can an ungraceful, awkward, translation of Homer be a good one? No: but a graceful, easy, natural, faithful version of him, will not that be a good one? Yes: allow me but this, and I insist upon it, that such a one may be produced on my principles, and can be produced on no other.

I have not had time to criticize his lordship's other version. You know how little time I have for any thing, and can tell him so.

Adieu! my dear brother. I have now tired both you and myself; and with the love of the whole trio, remain *yours ever,* W.C.

Reading his lordship's sentiments over again, I am inclined to think, that in all I have said, I have only given him back the same in other terms. He disallows both the absolute *free*, and the absolute *close*—so do I, and, if I understand myself, have said so in my Preface. He wishes to recommend a medium, though he will not call it so—so do I; only we express it differently. What is it then that we dispute about? My head is not good enough to-day to discover.

These letters were followed by such a silence on the part of Cowper, as excited the severest apprehensions, which were painfully confirmed by the intelligence conveyed in the ensuing letter.

FROM THE REV. MR. GREATHEED—TO WILLIAM HAYLEY, ESQ.

Newport Pagnel, April 8, 1794.

Dear Sir—Lady Hesketh's correspondence acquainted you with the melancholy relapse of our dear friend at Weston; but I am uncertain whether you know, that in the last fortnight he has refused food of every kind, except now and then a very small piece of toasted bread dipped generally in water, sometimes mixed with a little wine. This, her ladyship informs me, was the case till last Saturday, since when he has eat a little at each family meal. He persists in refusing such medicines as are indispensable to his state of body. In

such circumstances, his long continuance in life cannot be expected. How devoutly to be wished is the alleviation of his danger and distress! You, dear sir, who know so well the worth of our beloved and admired friend, sympathize with his affliction, and deprecate his loss doubtless in no ordinary degree; you have already most effectually expressed and proved the warmth of your friendship. I cannot think that any thing but your society would have been sufficient, during the infirmity under which his mind has long been oppressed, to have supported him against the shock of Mrs. Unwin's paralytic attack. I am certain that nothing else could have prevailed upon him to undertake the journey to Eartham. You have succeeded where his other friends knew they could not, and where they apprehended no one could. How natural therefore, nay, how reasonable, is it for them to look to you, as most likely to be instrumental, under the blessing of God, for relief in the present distressing and alarming crisis! It is indeed scarcely attemptable to ask any person to take such a journey, and involve himself in so melancholy a scene, with an uncertainty of the desired success; increased as the apparent difficulty is by dear Mr. Cowper's aversion to all company, and by poor Mrs. Unwin's mental and bodily infirmities. On these accounts Lady Hesketh dares not ask it of you, rejoiced as she would be at your arrival. Am not I, dear sir, a very presumptuous person, who, in the face of all opposition, dare do this? I am emboldened by those two powerful supporters, conscience and ex-

perience. Was I at Eartham, I would certainly undertake the labour I presume to recommend, for the bare possibility of restoring Mr. Cowper to himself, to his friends, to the public, and to God.

Hayley, on the receipt of this letter, lost no time in repairing to Weston; but his unhappy friend was too much overwhelmed by his oppressive malady to show even the least glimmering of satisfaction at the appearance of a guest whom he used to receive with the most lively expressions of affectionate delight.

It is the nature of this tremendous melancholy, not only to enshroud and stifle the finest faculties of the mind, but it suspends, and apparently annihilates, for a time, the strongest and best-rooted affections of the heart.

Lady Hesketh, profiting by Hayley's presence, quitted her charge for a few days, that she might have a personal conference with Dr. Willis. A friendly letter from Lord Thurlow to that celebrated physician had requested his attention to the highly interesting sufferer. Dr. Willis prescribed for Cowper, and saw him at Weston, but not with that success and felicity, which made his medical skill on another most awful occasion the source of national delight and exultation.

Indeed, the extraordinary state of Cowper appeared to abound with circumstances very unfavourable to his mental relief. The daily sight of a being reduced to such deplorable imbecility as

now overwhelmed Mrs. Unwin, was in itself sufficient to plunge a tender spirit into extreme melancholy; yet to separate two friends, so long accustomed to minister, with the purest and most vigilant benevolence, to the infirmities of each other, was a measure so pregnant with complicated distraction, that it could not be advised or attempted. It remained only to palliate the sufferings of each in their present most pitiable condition, and to trust in the mercy of that God, who had supported them together through periods of very dark affliction, though not so doubly deplorable as the present.

Who can contemplate this distressing spectacle without recalling the following pathetic exclamation in the Sampson Agonistes of Milton?

God of our fathers, what is man?
* * * * *
Since such as thou hast solemnly elected,
With gifts and graces eminently adorned;
* * * * *
Yet towards these thus dignified, thou oft
Amidst their height of noon,
Changest thy count'nance, and thy hand, with no regard
Of highest favours past
From thee on them, or them to thee of service.
* * * * *
So deal not with this once thy glorious champion!
What do I beg? How hast thou dealt already!
Behold him in this state calamitous, and turn
His labours, for thou canst, to peaceful end!

It was on the 23rd of April, 1794, in one of those melancholy mornings, when his kind and af-

fectionate relation Lady Heaketh and Hayley were watching together over this dejected sufferer, that a letter from Lord Spencer arrived at Weston, to announce the intended grant of a pension from his Majesty to Cowper, of 300*l.* per annum, rendered payable to his friend Mr. Rose, as the trustee of Cowper. This intelligence produced in the friends of the poet very lively emotions of delight, yet blended with pain almost as powerful; for it was painful, in no trifling degree, to reflect that these desirable smiles of good fortune could not impart even a faint glimmering of joy to the dejected poet.

From the time when Hayley left his unhappy friend at Weston, in the spring of the year 1794, he remained there under the tender vigilance of Lady Hesketh, till the latter end of July 1795:—a long season of the darkest depression! in which the best medical advice and the influence of time appeared equally unable to lighten that afflictive burthen which pressed incessantly on his spirits.

It was under these circumstances that my revered brother-in-law, with a generous disinterestedness and affection that must ever endear him to the admirers of Cowper, determined, with Lady Hesketh's concurrence, to remove the poet and his afflicted companion into Norfolk. In adopting this plan he did not contemplate more than a year's absence from Weston. But what was intended to be only temporary, proved in the sequel to be a final removal.

Few events could have been more painful to Cowper than a separation from his beloved Weston.

Every object was familiar to his eye, and had long engaged the affections of his heart. Its beautiful scenery had been traced with all the minuteness of description, and the glow of poetic fancy. The slow-winding Ouse, "bashful yet impatient to be seen," was henceforth to glide "in its sinuous course" unperceived. The spacious meads, the lengthened colonnade, the proud alcove, and the sound of the sweet village-bells—these memorials of past happy days were to be seen and heard no more. All have felt the pang excited by the separation or loss of friends; but who has not also experienced that even trees have tongues, and that every object in nature knows how to plead its empire over the heart?

What Cowper's sensations were on this occasion, may be collected from the following little incident.

On the morning of his departure from Weston, he wrote the following lines in pencil on the back of the shutter, in his bed-room.

"Farewell, dear scenes, for ever closed to me!
Oh! for what sorrows must I now exchange you!"

These lines have been carefully preserved as the expressive memorial of his feelings on leaving Weston. Nor can the following little poem fail to excite interest, not only as being the last original production which he composed at Weston, but from its deep and unaffected pathos. It is addressed to Mrs. Unwin. No language can exhibit a specimen of verse more exquisitely tender.

TO MARY.

The twentieth year is well nigh past,
Since first our sky was overcast,
Ah, would that this might be the last!
My Mary!

Thy spirits have a fainter flow,
I see thee daily weaker grow—
'Twas my distress that brought thee low,
My Mary!

Thy needles, once a shining store,
For my sake restless heretofore,
Now rust disus'd, and shine no more,
My Mary!

For, though thou gladly would'st fulfil
The same kind office for me still,
Thy sight now seconds not thy will,
My Mary!

But well thou play'dst the housewife's part,
And all thy threads, with magic art,
Have wound themselves about this heart,
My Mary!

Thy indistinct expressions seem
Like language utter'd in a dream;
Yet me they charm, whate'er the theme,
My Mary!

Thy silver locks, once auburn bright,
Are still more lovely in my sight
Than golden beams of orient light,
My Mary!

For, could I view nor them nor thee,
What sight worth seeing could I see?
The sun would rise in vain for me,
My Mary!

Partakers of thy sad decline,
Thy hands their little force resign;
Yet, gently prest, press gently mine,
My Mary!

Such feebleness of limbs thou prov'st,
That now at every step thou mov'st
Upheld by two, yet still thou lov'st,
My Mary!

And still to love, though prest with ill,
In wintry age to feel no chill,
With me is to be lovely still,
My Mary!

But, ah! by constant heed I know,
How oft the sadness that I show
Transforms thy smiles to looks of woe,
My Mary!

And, should my future lot be cast
With much resemblance of the past,
Thy worn-out heart will break at last,
My Mary!

On Tuesday, the twenty-eighth of July, 1795, Cowper and Mrs. Unwin removed, under the care and guidance of Mr. Johnson, from Weston to North-Tuddenham, in Norfolk, by a journey of three days, passing through Cambridge without stopping there. In the evening of the first day they rested at the village of Eaton, near St. Neot's. Cowper walked with his young kinsman in the churchyard by moonlight, and spoke with much composure on the subject of Thomson's Seasons, and the circumstances under which they were probably written. This conversation was almost his last glimmering of *cheerfulness.*

At North-Tuddenham the travellers were accommodated with a commodious, untenanted parsonage-house, by the kindness of the Rev. Leonard Shelford. Here they resided till the nineteenth of August. It was the considerate intention of Mr. Johnson not to remove them immediately to his own house, in the town of East-Dereham, lest the situation in a market-place should be distressing to the tender spirits of Cowper.

In their new temporary residence they were received by Miss Johnson and Miss Perowne, whose gentle and sympathizing spirit peculiarly qualified them to discharge so delicate an office, and to alleviate the sufferings of the dejected poet.

Severe as his depressive malady appeared at this period, he was still able to bear considerable exercise, and, before he left Tuddenham, he walked with Mr. Johnson to the neighbouring village of Mattishall, on a visit to his cousin, Mrs. Bodham. On surveying his own portrait by Abbot, in the house of that lady, he clasped his hands in a paroxysm of pain, and uttered a vehement wish, that his present sensations might be such as they were when that picture was painted.

In August 1795, Mr. Johnson conducted his two invalids to Mundsley, a village on the Norfolk coast, in the hope that a situation by the sea-side might prove salutary and amusing to Cowper. They continued to reside there till October, but without any apparent benefit to the health of the interesting sufferer.

He had long relinquished epistolary intercourse

with his most intimate friends, but his tender solicitude to hear some tidings of his favourite Weston induced him, in September, to write a letter to Mr. Buchanan. It shows the severity of his depression, but proves also that transient gleams of pleasure could occasionally break through the brooding darkness of melancholy.

He begins with a poetical quotation:

"To interpose a little ease,
Let my frail thoughts dally with false surmise!"

"I will forget, for a moment, that to whomsoever I may address myself, a letter from me can no otherwise be welcome than as a curiosity. To you, sir, I address this; urged to it by extreme penury of employment, and the desire I feel to learn something of what is doing, and has been done, at Weston, (my beloved Weston!) since I left it.

"The coldness of these blasts, even in the hottest days, has been such, that, added to the irritation of the salt-spray, with which they are always charged, they have occasioned me an inflammation in the eye-lids, which threatened a few days since to confine me entirely, but, by absenting myself as much as possible from the beach, and guarding my face with an umbrella, that inconvenience is in some degree abated. My chamber commands a very near view of the ocean, and the ships at high water approach the coast so closely, that a man furnished with better eyes than mine might, I doubt not, discern the sailors from the window. No situation, at *least when the weather is* clear and bright, can be

pleasanter; which you will easily credit, when I add, that it imparts something a little resembling pleasure even to me.—Gratify me with news of Weston! If Mr. Gregson, and your neighbours the Courtenays are there, mention me to them in such terms as you see good. Tell me if my poor birds are living! I never see the herbs I used to give them, without a recollection of them, and sometimes am ready to gather them, forgetting that I am not at home. Pardon this intrusion!

"Mrs. Unwin continues much as usual.

"Mundsley, Sept. 5, 1795."

Mr. Buchanan endeavoured, with great tenderness and ingenuity, to allure his dejected friend to prolong a correspondence, that seemed to promise some little alleviation to his melancholy; but this distressing malady baffled all the various expedients that could be devised to counteract its overwhelming influence.

Much hope was entertained from air and exercise, with a frequent change of scene.—In September, Mr. Johnson conducted his kinsman (to the promotion of whose recovery he devoted his most unwearied efforts) to take a survey of Dunham-Lodge, a seat at that time vacant; it is situated on high ground, in a park, about four miles from Swaffham. Cowper spoke of it as a house rather too spacious for him, yet such as he was not unwilling to inhabit —a remark which induced Mr. Johnson, at a subsequent period, to become the tenant of this mansion,

as a scene more eligible for Cowper than the town of Dereham.——This town they also surveyed in their excursion; and, after passing a night there, returned to Mundsley, which they quitted for the season on the seventh of October.

They removed immediately to Dereham; but left it in the course of a month for Dunham-Lodge, which now became their settled residence.

The spirits of Cowper were not sufficiently revived to allow him to resume either his pen or his books; but the kindness of his young kinsman continued to furnish him with inexhaustible amusement, by reading to him almost incessantly; and, although he was not led to converse on what he heard, yet it failed not to rivet his attention, and so to prevent his afflicted mind from preying on itself.

In April, 1796, Mrs. Unwin, whose infirmities continued to engage the tender attention of Cowper, even in his darkest periods of depression, received a visit from her daughter and son-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Powley. On their departure, Mr. Johnson assumed the office which Mrs. Powley had tenderly performed for her venerable parent, and regularly read a chapter in the Bible every morning to Mrs. Unwin before she rose. It was the invariable custom of Cowper to visit his poor old friend the moment he had finished his breakfast, and to remain in her apartment while the chapter was read.

In June, the pressure of his melancholy appeared in some degree alleviated, for, on Mr. Johnson's re-

ceiving the edition of Pope's Homer, published by Wakefield, Cowper eagerly seized the book, and began to read the notes to himself with visible interest. They awakened his attention to his own version of Homer. In August he deliberately engaged in a revisal of the whole, and for some time produced almost sixty new lines a day.

This mental occupation animated all his intimate friends with a most lively hope of his progressive recovery. But autumn repressed the hope that summer had excited.

In September the family removed from Dunham-Lodge to try again the influence of the sea-side, in their favourite village of Mundsley.

Cowper walked frequently by the sea; but no apparent benefit arose, no mild relief from the incessant pressure of melancholy. He had relinquished his Homer again, and could not yet be induced to resume it.

Towards the end of October, this interesting party retired from the coast to the house of Mr. Johnson, in Dereham—a house now chosen for their winter residence, as Dunham-Lodge appeared to them too dreary.

The long and exemplary life of Mrs. Unwin was drawing towards a close:—the powers of nature were gradually exhausted, and on the seventeenth of December she ended a troubled existence, distinguished by a sublime spirit of piety and friendship, that shone through long periods of calamity, and continued to glimmer through the distressful twilight of her declining faculties. Her death was calm

and tranquil. Cowper saw her about half an hour before the moment of expiration, which passed without a struggle or a groan, as the clock was striking one in the afternoon.

On the morning of that day, he said to the servant who opened the window of his chamber, "Sally, is there life above stairs?" A striking proof of his bestowing incessant attention on the sufferings of his aged friend, although he had long appeared almost totally absorbed in his own.

In the dusk of the evening he attended Mr. Johnson to survey the corpse; and after looking at it a few moments he started suddenly away, with a vehement but unfinished sentence of passionate sorrow. He spoke of her no more.

She was buried by torch-light, on the twenty-third of December, in the north aisle of Dereham church; and two of her friends, impressed with a just and deep sense of her extraordinary merit, have raised a marble tablet to her memory with the following inscription:

IN MEMORY OF MARY,

WIDOW OF THE REV. MORLEY UNWIN,

AND

MOTHER OF THE REV. WILLIAM CAWTHORN UNWIN,

BORN AT ELY, 1724,

BURIED IN THIS CHURCH, 1796.

Trusting in God, with all her heart and mind,
This woman prov'd magnanimously kind;

Endur'd affliction's desolating hail,
And watch'd a poet thro' misfortune's vale.
Her spotless dust, angelic guards, defend!
It is the dust of Unwin, Cowper's friend!
That single title in itself is fame,
For all who read his verse revere her name.

It might have been anticipated that the death of Mrs. Unwin, in Cowper's enfeebled state, would have proved too severe a shock to his agitated nerves. But it is mercifully ordained that, while declining years incapacitate us for trials, they, at the same time, weaken the sensibility to suffering, and thereby render us less accessible to the influence of sorrow. It may be regarded as an instance of providential mercy to this afflicted poet, that his aged friend, whose life he had so long considered as essential to his own, was taken from him at a time when the pressure of his malady, a perpetual low fever, both of body and mind, had, in a great degree, diminished the native energy of his faculties and affections.

Owing to these causes, Cowper was so far preserved in this season of trial, that, instead of mourning the loss of a person in whose life he had seemed to live, all perception of that loss was mercifully taken from him; and, from the moment when he hurried away from the inanimate object of his filial attachment, he appeared to have no memory of her having existed, for he never asked a question concerning her funeral, nor ever mentioned her name.

Towards the summer of 1797, his bodily health appeared to improve, but not to such a degree as

to restore any comfortable activity to his mind. In June he wrote a brief letter to Hayley, but such as too forcibly expressed the cruelty of his distemper.

The process of digestion never passed regularly in his frame during the years that he resided in Norfolk. Medicine appeared to have little or no influence on his complaint, and his aversion at the sight of it was extreme.

From asses' milk, of which he began a course on the twenty-first of June in this year, he gained a considerable acquisition of bodily strength, and was enabled to bear an airing in an open carriage, before breakfast, with Mr. Johnson.

A depression of mind, which suspended the studies of a writer so eminently endeared to the public, was considered by men of piety and learning as a national misfortune, and several individuals of this description, though personally unknown to Cowper, wrote to him in the benevolent hope that expressions of friendly praise, from persons who could be influenced only by the most laudable motives in bestowing it, might re-animate his dejected spirit. Among these might be enumerated Dr. Watson, the Bishop of Llandaff, who kindly addressed him in the language of encouragement and of soothing consolation; but the pressure of his malady had now made him utterly deaf to the most honourable praise.

He had long discontinued the revisal of his Homer, when his kinsman, dreading the effect of the cessation of bodily exercise upon his mind during a long winter, resolved, if possible, to en-

gage him in the revisal of this work. One morning, therefore, after breakfast, in the month of September, he placed the Commentators on the table, one by one; namely, Villoisson, Barnes, and Clarke, opening them all, together with the poet's translation, at the place where he had left off a twelvemonth before, but talking with him, as he paced the room, upon a very different subject, namely, the impossibility of the things befalling him which his imagination had represented; when, as his companion had wished, he said to him, "And are you sure that I shall be here till the book you are reading is finished?" "Quite sure," replied his kinsman, "and that you will also be here to complete the revisal of your Homer," pointing to the books, "if you will resume it to-day." As he repeated these words he left the room, rejoicing in the well-known token of their having sunk into the poet's mind, namely, his seating himself on the sofa, taking up one of the books, and saying in a low and plaintive voice, "I may as well do this, for I can do nothing else."*

In this labour he persevered, oppressed as he was by indisposition, till March 1799. On Friday evening, the eighth of that month, he completed his revisal of the Odyssey, and the next morning wrote part of a new preface.

To watch over the disordered health of afflicted genius, and to lead a powerful, but oppressed, spirit by gentle encouragement, to exert itself in salu-

* Sketch of the Life of Cowper.

tary occupation, is an office that requires a very rare union of tenderness, intelligence, and fortitude. To contemplate and minister to a great mind, in a state that borders on mental desolation, is like surveying, in the midst of a desert, the tottering ruins of palaces and temples, where the faculties of the spectator are almost absorbed in wonder and regret, and where every step is taken with awful apprehension.

Hayley, in alluding to Dr. Johnson's kind and affectionate offices, at this period, bears the following honourable testimony to his merits, which we are happy in transcribing. "It seemed as if Providence had expressly formed the young kinsman of Cowper to prove exactly such a guardian to his declining years as the peculiar exigencies of his situation required. I never saw the human being that could, I think, have sustained the delicate and arduous office (in which the inexhaustible virtues of Mr. Johnson persevered to the last) through a period so long, with an equal portion of unvaried tenderness and unshaken fidelity. A man who wanted sensibility would have renounced the duty; and a man endowed with a particle too much of that valuable, though perilous, quality, must have felt his own health utterly undermined, by an excess of sympathy with the sufferings perpetually in his sight. Mr. Johnson has completely discharged, perhaps, the most trying of human duties; and I trust he will forgive me for this public declaration, that, in his mode of discharging it, he has merited the most cordial esteem from all, who love

the memory of Cowper. Even a stranger may consider it as a strong proof of his tender dexterity in soothing and guiding the afflicted poet, that he was able to engage him steadily to pursue and finish the revisal and correction of his Homer, during a long period of bodily and mental sufferings, when his troubled mind recoiled from all intercourse with his most intimate friends, and laboured under a morbid abhorrence of all cheerful exertion."

In the summer of 1798, his kinsman was induced to vary his plan of remaining for some months in the marine village of Mundsley, and thought it more eligible to make frequent visits from Dereham to the coast, passing a week at a time by the sea-side.

Cowper, in his poem on "Retirement," seems to inform us what his own sentiments were, in a season of health, concerning the regimen most proper for the disease of melancholy.

> Virtuous and faithful Heberden, whose skill
> Attempts no task it cannot well fulfil,
> Gives melancholy up to nature's care,
> And sends the patient into purer air.

The frequent change of place, and the magnificence of marine scenery, produced at times a little relief to his depressed spirits. On the 7th of June, 1798, he surveyed the light-house at Happisburgh, and expressed some pleasure on beholding, through a telescope, several ships at a distance. Yet, in his usual walk with his companion by the sea-side, he

exemplified, but too forcibly, his own affecting description of melancholy silence:

> That silent tongue
> Could give advice, could censure, or commend,
> Or charm the sorrows of a drooping friend;
> Renounc'd alike its office and its sport,
> Its brisker and its graver strains fall short:
> Both fail beneath a fever's secret sway,
> And, like a summer-brook, are past away.

On the twenty-fourth of July, Cowper had the honour of a visit from a lady, for whom he had long entertained affectionate respect, the Dowager Lady Spencer—and it was rather remarkable, that on the very morning she called upon him he had begun his revisal of the Odyssey, which was originally inscribed to her. Such an incident in a happier season would have produced a very enlivening effect on his spirits; but, in his present state, it had not even the power to lead him into any free conversation with his distinguished visitor.

The only amusement that he appeared to admit without reluctance was the reading of his kinsman, who, indefatigable in the supply of such amusement, had exhausted a successive series of works of fiction, and at this period began reading to the poet his own works. To these he listened also in silence, and heard all his poems recited in order, till the reader arrived at the history of John Gilpin, which he begged not to hear. Mr. Johnson proceeded to his manuscript poems; to these he willingly listened, but made not a single remark on any.

In October 1798, the pressure of his melancholy seemed to be mitigated in some little degree, for he exerted himself so far as to write the following letter, without solicitation, to Lady Hesketh.

Dear Cousin—You describe delightful scenes, but you describe them to one, who, if he even saw them, could receive no delight from them: who has a faint recollection, and so faint, as to be like an almost forgotten dream, that once he was susceptible of pleasure from such causes. The country that you have had in prospect has been always famed for its beauties; but the wretch who can derive no gratification from a view of nature, even under the disadvantage of her most ordinary dress, will have no eyes to admire her in any.

In one day, in one minute, I should rather have said, she became an universal blank to me, and though from a different cause, yet with an effect as difficult to remove as blindness itself.

* * * * * *

Mundsley, October 13, 1798.

On his return from Mundsley to Dereham, in an evening towards the end of October, Cowper, with Miss Perowne and Mr. Johnson, was overturned in a post-chaise: he discovered no terror on the occasion, and escaped without injury from the accident.

In December he received a visit from his highly esteemed friend, Sir John Throckmorton, but his malady was at that time so oppressive that it ren-

dered him almost insensible to the kind solicitude of friendship.

He still continued to exercise the powers of his astonishing mind: upon his finishing the revisal of his Homer, in March 1799, his kinsman endeavoured in the gentlest manner to lead him into new literary occupation.

For this purpose, on the eleventh of March he laid before him the paper containing the commencement of his poem on "The Four Ages." Cowper altered a few lines; he also added a few, but soon observed to his kind attendant—"that it was too great a work for him to attempt in his present situation."

At supper Mr. Johnson suggested to him several literary projects that he might execute more easily. He replied—"that he had just thought of six Latin verses, and if he could compose any thing it must be in pursuing that composition."

The next morning he wrote the six verses he had mentioned, and subsequently added the remainder, entitling the poem, "Montes Glaciales."

It proved a versification of a circumstance recorded in a newspaper, which had been read to him a few weeks before, without his appearing to notice it. This poem he translated into English verse, on the nineteenth of March, to oblige Miss Perowne. Both the original and the translation appear in the Poems.

On the twentieth of March he wrote the stanzas entitled "The Cast-away," founded on an anecdote in Anson's Voyage, which his memory suggested

to him, a though he had not looked into the book for many years.

As this poem is the last original production from the pen of Cowper, we shall introduce it here, persuaded that it will be read with an interest proportioned to the extraordinary pathos of the subject, and the still more extraordinary powers of the poet, whose lyre could sound so forcibly, unsilenced by the gloom of the darkest distemper, that was conducting him, by slow gradations, to the shadow of death.

THE CAST-AWAY.

Obscurest night involv'd the sky;
Th' Atlantic billows roar'd,
When such a destin'd wretch as I,
Wash'd headlong from on board,
Of friends, of hope, of all bereft,
His floating home for ever left.

No braver chief could Albion boast
Than he with whom he went,
Nor ever ship left Albion's coast,
With warmer wishes sent.
He lov'd them both, but both in vain,
Nor him behold, nor her again.

Not long beneath the 'whelming brine,
Expert to swim, he lay;
Nor soon he felt his strength decline,
Or courage die away;
But wag'd with death a lasting strife,
Supported by despair of life.

He shouted; nor his friends had fail'd
To check the vessel's course,
But so the furious blast prevail'd,
That, pitiless per force,

They left their out-cast mate behind,
And scudded still before the wind.

Some succour yet they could afford;
  And, such as storms allow,
The cask, the coop, the floated cord,
  Delay'd not to bestow.
But he (they knew) nor ship, nor shore,
Whate'er they gave, should visit more.

Nor cruel, as it seem'd, could he
  Their haste himself condemn,
Aware that flight, in such a sea,
  Alone could rescue them;
Yet bitter felt it still to die
Deserted, and his friends so nigh.

He long survives, who lives an hour
  In ocean, self-upheld:
And so long he, with unspent pow'r,
  His destiny repell'd:
And ever, as the minutes flew,
Entreated help, or cry'd—"Adieu!"

At length, his transient respite past,
  His comrades, who before
Had heard his voice in ev'ry blast,
  Could catch the sound no more.
For then, by toil subdued, he drank
The stifling wave, and then he sank.

No poet wept him: but the page
  Of narrative sincere,
That tells his name, his worth, his age,
  Is wet with Anson's tear.
And tears by bards or heroes shed,
Alike immortalize the dead.

I therefore purpose not, or dream,
  Descanting on his fate!
To give the melancholy theme
  A more enduring date,

But misery still delights to trace
Its 'semblance in another's case.

No voice divine the storm allay'd,
No light propitious shone;
When, snatch'd from all effectual aid,
We perish'd, each alone;
But I beneath a rougher sea,
And 'whelm'd in deeper gulfs than he.

In August he translated this poem into Latin verse. In October he went with Miss Perowne and Mr. Johnson to survey a larger house in Dereham, which he preferred to their present residence, and in which the family were settled in the following December.

Though his corporeal strength was now evidently declining, the urgent persuasion of his kinsman induced him to amuse his mind with frequent composition. Between August and December, he wrote all the translations from various Latin and Greek epigrams, which the reader will find in our eighth volume.

In his new residence, he amused himself with translating a few fables of Gay's into Latin verse. The fable which he used to recite when a child—"The Hare and many Friends"—became one of his latest amusements.

These Latin fables were all written in January 1800. Towards the end of that month, Hayley requested him to new-model a passage in his Homer, relating to the curious monument of ancient sculpture, so gracefully described by Homer, called the Cretan Dance. This being the last effort of

his pen, and the passage being interesting, as a representation of ancient manners, we here insert it.

> To these the glorious artist added next
> A varied dance, resembling that of old
> In Crete's broad isle, by Dædalus, compos'd
> For bright-hair'd Ariadne. There the youths
> And youth-alluring maidens, hand in hand,
> Danc'd jocund, ev'ry maiden neat attir'd
> In finest linen, and the youths in vests
> Well-woven, glossy as the glaze of oil.
> These all wore garlands, and bright falchions these,
> Of burnish'd gold, in silver trappings hung;—
> They, with well-tutor'd step, now, nimbly ran
> The circle, swift, as when, before his wheel
> Seated, the potter twirls it with both hands
> For trial of its speed; now, crossing quick
> They pass'd at once into each other's place
> A circling crowd survey'd the lovely dance,
> Delighted; two, the leading pair, their head
> With graceful inclination bowing oft,
> Pass'd swift between them, and began the song.
>
> *See Cowper's Version*, Book xviii.

On the very day that this endearing mark of his kindness reached Hayley, a dropsical appearance in his legs induced Mr. Johnson to have recourse to fresh medical assistance. Cowper was with great difficulty persuaded to take the remedies prescribed, and to try the exercise of a post-chaise, an exercise which he could not bear beyond the twenty-second of February.

In March, when his decline became more and more visible, he was visited by Mr. Rose. He hardly *expressed any* pleasure on the arrival of a

friend whom he had so long and so tenderly regarded, yet he showed evident signs of regret at his departure, on the sixth of April.

The illness and impending death of his talented son precluded Hayley from sharing with Mr. Rose in these last marks of affectionate attention towards the man, whose genius and virtues they had once contemplated together, with mutual veneration and delight; whose approaching dissolution they felt, not only as an irreparable loss to themselves, but as a national misfortune. On the nineteenth of April, Dr. Johnson remarks, the weakness of this truly pitiable sufferer had so much increased, that his kinsman apprehended his death to be near. Adverting, therefore, to the affliction, as well of body as of mind, which his beloved inmate was then enduring, he ventured to speak of his approaching dissolution as the signal of his deliverance from both these miseries. After a pause of a few moments, which was less interrupted by the objections of his desponding relative than he had dared to hope, he proceeded to an observation more consolatory still; namely, that, in the world to which he was hastening, a merciful Redeemer had prepared unspeakable happiness for all his children—and therefore for him. To the first part of this sentence, he had listened with composure, but the concluding words were no sooner uttered, than his passionately expressed entreaties, that his companion would desist from any further observations of a similar kind, clearly proved that, though it was on the eve of being invested with angelic

light, the darkness of delusion still veiled his spirit.*

On Sunday, the twentieth, he seemed a little revived.

On Monday he appeared dying, but recovered so much as to eat a slight dinner.

Tuesday and Wednesday he grew apparently weaker every hour.

On Thursday he sat up as usual in the evening.

In the course of the night, when exceedingly exhausted, Miss Perowne offered him some refreshment. He rejected it with these words, the very last that he was heard to utter, "What can it signify?"

Dr. Johnson closes the affecting account in the following words.

"At five in the morning of Friday 25th, a deadly change in his features was observed to take place. He remained in an insensible state from that time till about five minutes before five in the afternoon, when he ceased to breathe. And in so mild and gentle a manner did his spirit take its flight, that though the writer of this Memoir, his medical attendant Mr. Woods, and three other persons, were standing at the foot and side of the bed, with their eyes fixed upon his dying countenance, the precise moment of his departure was unobserved by any."

From this mournful period, till the features of his deceased friend were closed from his view, the expression which the kinsman of Cowper observed

* Sketch *of the Life of Cowper*, by Dr. Johnson.

in them, and which he was affectionately delighted to suppose "an index of the last thoughts and enjoyments of his soul, in its gradual escape from the depths of despondence, was that of calmness and composure, mingled, as it were, with holy surprise."

He was buried in St. Edmund's Chapel, in the Church of East Dereham, on Saturday, May 2nd, attended by several of his relations.

He died intestate. His affectionate relative, Lady Hesketh, fulfilled the office of his administratrix, and raised a marble tablet to his memory, where his ashes repose, with the following inscription from the pen of Hayley.

IN MEMORY OF

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ.

BORN IN HERTFORDSHIRE,

1731,

BURIED IN THIS CHURCH.

Ye, who with warmth the public triumph feel
Of talents, dignified by sacred zeal,
Here, to devotion's bard devoutly just,
Pay your fond tribute due to Cowper's dust!
England, exulting in his spotless fame,
Ranks with her dearest sons his favourite name.
Sense, fancy, wit, suffice not all to raise
So clear a title to affection's praise;
His highest honours to the heart belong;
His virtues form'd the magic of his song.

We have now conducted the endeared subject of this biography through the various scenes of his chequered and eventful life, till its last solemn termination; and it is impossible that any other feelings can have been awakened than those of admiration for his genius, homage for his virtues, and profound sympathy for his sufferings. It was fully anticipated by his friends, that the hour of final liberation, at least, would have been cheered by that calm sense of the divine presence, which is the delightful foretaste of eternal rest and glory. Young beautifully observes:

> The chamber where the good man meets his fate
> Is privileged beyond the common walk
> Of virtuous life, quite on the verge of heav'n.

The Bible proclaims the same animating truth. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace!" The divine faithfulness is an ample security for the fulfilment of these declarations; but the promises of God, firm and unchangeable as they are in themselves, after all, can be realized only in a mind disposed for their reception; as the light cannot pass through a medium that is incapable of admitting it. Such, alas! is the influence of physical causes and of a morbid temperament on the inward perceptions of the soul, that it is possible to be a child of God, without a consciousness of the blessing, and to have a title to a crown, and yet feel to be immured in the depths of a dungeon.

The consolation to the friends of the unhappy

sufferer, if not to the patient himself, is, that the chains are of his own forging, and that, if he had but the discernment to know it, the delusion would promptly vanish, and the peace of God flow into the soul like a river.

That such was the case with Cowper, no one can doubt for a moment. A species of mental aberration, on a particular subject, involved his mind in a strange and sad delusion. The Sun of Righteousness, therefore, failed in his last moments to impart its refreshing light and comfort, because the cloud of despair intervened, and obscured the setting beams of grace and glory.

Who can contemplate so mysterious a process of the mind, without exclaiming,

> How poor, how rich, how abject, how august.
> How complicate, how wonderful is man!
> How passing wonder He, who made him such!
> Who centred in our make such strange extremes!

It is impossible to dwell on the manner of Cowper's death, and not to be reminded of the wish cherished by himself on this subject, and recorded so impressively in the following lines:

> So life glides smoothly and by stealth away,
> More golden than that age of fabled gold
> Renown'd in ancient song; not vex'd with care,
> Or stain'd with guilt, beneficent, approv'd
> Of God and man, and peaceful in its end.
> *So glide my life away! and so, at last,*
> *My share of duties decently fulfill'd,*
> *May some disease, not tardy to perform*
> *Its destin'd office, yet with gentle stroke,*

Dismiss me weary to a safe retreat,
*Beneath the turf that I have often trod.**

God mercifully granted the best portion of his prayer, but saw fit to deny the rest. No conscious guilt or open transgression stained his life; his heart was the seat of every beneficent and kind affection. As an author, he was blessed with an honourable career of usefulness; the public voice conferred upon him the title to immortality, and succeeding times have ratified the claim. But if perception be necessary to enjoyment, he was not "peaceful in his end;" for he died without this conviction. He did not, like Elijah, ascend in a chariot of fire; it was his lot rather to realize the quaint remark of some of the old divines, "God sometimes puts his children to bed in the dark," that they may have nothing whereof to boast; that their salvation may appear to be more fully the result of his own free and unmerited mercy, and that in this, as in all things, he may be known to act as a sovereign, who "giveth no account of his matters."†

But the severest exercises of faith are always mingled with some gracious purpose; and God may perhaps see fit to appoint these dark dispensations, that the transition into eternity may be more glorious; and that the emancipated spirit, bursting the shackles of death and sin, and delivered from the bondage of its fears, may rise with a nobler triumph from the depths of humiliation into the very presence-chamber of its God.

These remarks are so closely connected with the

* The Task, book vi. † Job xxxiii. 18.

subject of Cowper's afflicting malady, that the time is now arrived when it is necessary to enter into a more detailed view of its nature and character; to trace its origin and progress, and to disengage this complicated question from that prejudice and misrepresentation which has so inveterately attached to it. At the same time, it is with profound reluctance that the Editor enters upon this painful theme, from a deep conviction that it does not form a proper subject for discussion, and that the veil of secrecy is never more suitably employed, than when it is thrown over infirmities which are too sacred to meet the gaze of public observation. This inquiry is now, however, no longer optional. Cowper himself has, unfortunately, suffered in the public estimation by the manner in which his earliest biographer, Hayley, has presented him before the public. By suppressing some very important letters, which tended to elucidate his real character, an air of mystery has been imparted, which deeply affects its consistency; while, by attributing what he could not sufficiently conceal of the malady of the poet to the operation of religious causes, truth has been violated, and an unmerited wound inflicted upon religion itself. Thus Hayley, from motives of delicacy most probably, or from misapprehension of the subject, has committed a double error; while others, misled by his authority, have unhappily aided in propagating the delusion.

The Private Correspondence of Cowper, which is exclusively incorporated with the present edition, is of the first importance, as it dispels the mystery pre-

viously attached to his character. All that now remains is, to establish by undeniable evidence that, so far from religious causes having been instrumental to his malady, the order of events and the testimony of positive facts both militate against such a conclusion.

For this purpose we shall now introduce to the notice of the reader, copious extracts from the Memoir of Cowper, written by himself, containing the particulars of his life, from his earliest years to the period of his malady and subsequent recovery. This remarkable document was intended to record his sense of the Divine mercy in the preservation of his life, during a season of disastrous feeling; and to perpetuate the remembrance of that grace which overruled this event, in so remarkable a manner, to his best and eternal interests. He designed this document principally for the perusal of Mrs. Unwin, to whose hands it was most confidentially entrusted. A copy was also presented to Mr. Newton, and ultimately to Dr. Johnson; but the parties were strictly enjoined never to allow another copy to be taken. By some means the Memoir at length found its way before the public. On this ground the editor feels less difficulty in communicating its purport; as the seal of secrecy has been already broken, though in the estimation of Dr. Johnson and his friends, in so unauthorized a manner. Its publication, however, has been unquestionably attended by one beneficial result, in having established, beyond the possibility of contradiction, that so far from Cowper's religious views having been the

source of his malady, they were the first occasion and instrument of its cure.*

The Memoir is interesting in another respect. It elucidates the early events of Cowper's history. One important subject is however omitted—his attachment to Miss Theodora Cowper, the failure of which formed no small ingredient in the disappointments of his early life. This omission we shall be enabled to supply.

With these preliminary remarks we shall now introduce this curious and remarkable document, simply suppressing those portions which violate the feelings, without being essential to the substance of the narrative.

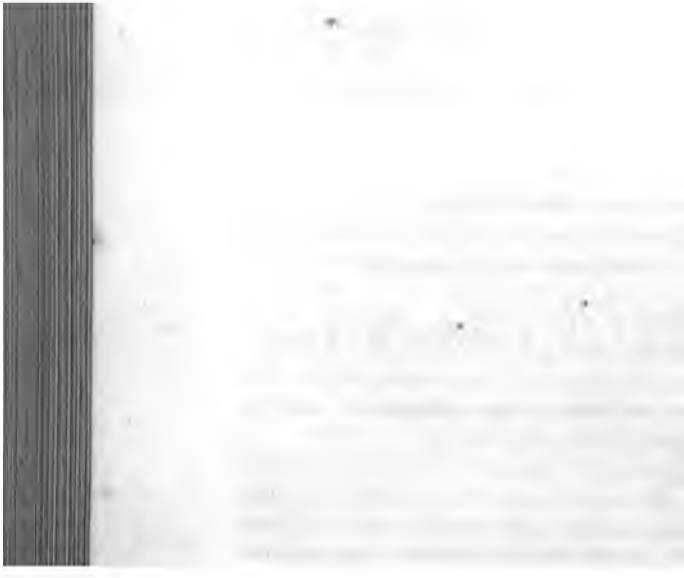
* The following is the result of the information obtained by the Editor on this subject, after the minutest inquiry. A lady who was on a visit at Mr. Newton's, in London, saw, it is said, this Memoir of Cowper lying, among other papers, on the table. She was led to peruse it, and felt a deeper interest in the contents, from having herself been recently recovered from a state of derangement. She privately copied the manuscript, and communicated it to some friend. It was finally published by a pious character, who considered that in so doing he exonerated the religious views of Cowper from the charge of having been instrumental to his malady.

MEMOIR

OF THE EARLY LIFE OF

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ.

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.



MEMOIR,

&c.

I CANNOT recollect, that, till the month of December, in the thirty-second year of my life, I had ever any serious impressions of the religious kind, or at all bethought myself of the things of my salvation, except in two or three instances. The first was of so transitory a nature, and passed when I was so very young, that, did I not intend what follows for a history of my heart, so far as religion has been its object, I should hardly mention it.

At SIX years old, I was taken from the nursery, and from the immediate care of a most indulgent mother, and sent to a considerable school in Bedfordshire.* Here I had hardships of different kinds to conflict with, which I felt more sensibly in proportion to the tenderness with which I had been treated at home. But my chief affliction consisted in my being singled out from all the other boys, by

* Market Street. Hayley places this village in Hertfordshire, and Cowper in Bedfordshire. Both are right, for the public road or street forms a boundary between the two counties.

a lad about fifteen years of age, as a proper object upon whom he might let loose the cruelty of his temper. I choose to forbear a particular recital of the many acts of barbarity, with which he made it his business continually to persecute me: it will be sufficient to say, that he had, by his savage treatment of me, impressed such a dread of his figure upon my mind, that I well remember being afraid to lift up my eyes upon him, higher than his knees; and that I knew him by his shoe-buckles, better than any other part of his dress. May the Lord pardon him, and may we meet in glory!

One day, as I was sitting alone on a bench in the school, melancholy, and almost ready to weep at the recollection of what I had already suffered, and expecting at the same time my tormentor every moment, these words of the Psalmist came into my mind, "I will not be afraid of what man can do unto me." I applied this to my own case, with a degree of trust and confidence in God, that would have been no disgrace to a much more experienced Christian. Instantly I perceived in myself a briskness of spirits, and a cheerfulness, which I had never before experienced; and took several paces up and down the room with joyful alacrity,—*his* gift in whom I trusted. Happy had it been for me, if this early effort towards a dependence on the blessed God had been frequently repeated by me. But, alas! it was the first and last instance of the kind between infancy and manhood. The cruelty of this boy, which he had long practised in so secret a manner that no creature suspected it,

was at length discovered. He was expelled from the school, and I was taken from it.

From hence, at eight years old, I was sent to Mr. D., an eminent surgeon and oculist, having very weak eyes, and being in danger of losing one of them. I continued a year in this family, where religion was neither known nor practised; and from thence was dispatched to Westminster. Whatever seeds of religion I might carry thither, before my seven years' apprenticeship to the classics was expired, they were all marred and corrupted; the duty of the school-boy swallowed up every other; and I acquired Latin and Greek at the expense of a knowledge much more important.*

Here occurred the second instance of serious consideration. As I was crossing St. Margaret's

* We deeply lament that boys frequently leave public schools most discreditably deficient even in the common principles of the Christian faith. My late lamented friend, the Rev. Legh Richmond, used to observe that Christ was crucified between classics and mathematics. A great improvement might be effected in the system of modern education, if a brief but compendious summary of divine truth, or analysis of the Bible, were drawn up, divided into parts, suited to the different gradations of age and knowledge, and introduced into our public schools under the sanction of the Episcopal Bench. Care should also be taken, in the selection of under-masters, to appoint men of *acknowledged religious as well as classical attainments*, who might specially superintend the religious improvement of the boys. Such are to be found in our Universities, men not less eminent for divine than profane knowledge. A visible reformation would thus be effected, powerfully operating on the moral and spiritual character of the rising generation.

churchyard, late one evening, I saw a glimmering light in the midst of it, which excited my curiosity. Just as I arrived at the spot, a grave-digger, who was at work by the light of his lanthorn, threw up a skull which struck me upon the leg. This little accident was an alarm to my conscience; for that event may be numbered among the best religious documents which I received at Westminster. The impression, however, presently went off, and I became so forgetful of mortality, that, strange as it may seem, surveying my activity and strength, and observing the evenness of my pulse, I began to entertain, with no small complacency, a notion that perhaps I might never die! This notion was, however, very short-lived; *for I was soon after struck with a lowness of spirits*, uncommon at my age, and frequently had intimations of a consumptive habit. I had skill enough to understand their meaning, but could never prevail on myself to disclose them to any one; for I thought any bodily infirmity a disgrace, especially a consumption. This messenger from the Lord, however, did his errand, and perfectly convinced me that I was mortal.

That I may do justice to the place of my education, I must relate one mark of religious discipline, which, in my time, was observed at Westminster; I mean, the pains which Dr. Nicholls took to prepare us for confirmation. The old man acquitted himself of his duty like one who had a deep sense of its importance; and I believe most of us were struck by his manner, and affected by his exhortation. For my own part, I then, for the first time,

ıttempted prayer in secret; but being little accus-
tomed to that exercise of the heart, and, having
very childish notions of religion, I found it a difficult
and painful task; and was even then frightened at
my own insensibility. This difficulty, though it did
not subdue my good purposes, till the ceremony of
confirmation was past, soon after entirely conquered
them; I relapsed into a total forgetfulness of God,
with the usual disadvantage of being more hardened,
for having been softened to no purpose.

At twelve or thirteen, I was seized with the
small-pox. I only mention this, to show that, at
that early age, my heart was become proof against
the ordinary means which a gracious God employs
for our chastisement. Though I was severely
handled by the disease, and in imminent danger,
yet neither in the course of it, nor during my reco-
very, had I any sentiment of contrition, any thought
of God or eternity. On the contrary, I was scarcely
raised from the bed of pain and sickness, before the
emotions of sin became more violent in me than
ever; and Satan seemed rather to have gained than
lost an advantage; so readily did I admit his sug-
gestions, and so passive was I under them.

By this time I became such an adept in falsehood,
that I was seldom guilty of a fault for which I could
not, at a very short notice, invent an apology, capa-
ble of deceiving the wisest. These, I know, are
called school-boys' tricks; but a sad depravity of
principle, and the work of the father of lies, are
universally at the bottom of them.

At the age of eighteen, being tolerably furnished

with grammatical knowledge, but as ignorant in all points of religion as the satchel at my back, I was taken from Westminster; and, having spent about nine months at home, was sent to acquire the practice of the law with an attorney. There I might have lived and died, without hearing or seeing any thing that might remind me of a single Christian duty, had it not been that I was at liberty to spend my leisure time (which was well nigh all my time) at my uncle's,* in Southampton Row. By this means I had indeed an opportunity of seeing the inside of a church, whither I went with the family on Sundays, which probably I should otherwise never have seen.

At the expiration of this term, I became, in a manner, complete master of myself; and took possession of a complete set of chambers in the Temple, at the age of twenty-one. This being a critical season of my life, and one upon which much depended, it pleased my all-merciful Father in Jesus Christ to give a check to my rash and ruinous career of wickedness at the very onset. *I was struck, not long after my settlement in the Temple, with such a dejection of spirits, as none but they who have felt the same, can have the least conception of. Day and night I was upon the rack, lying down in horror, and rising up in despair.*† I presently lost all relish for those studies to which I had before

* Ashley Cowper, Esq.

† Here we first observe the ground-work of Cowper's malady, originating in constitutional causes, and morbid temperament.

been closely attached; the classics had no longer any charms for me; I had need of something more salutary than amusement, but I had no one to direct me where to find it.

At length I met with Herbert's Poems; and gothic and uncouth as they were, I yet found in them a strain of piety which I could not but admire. This was the only author I had any delight in reading. I pored over him all day long; and though I found not here, what I might have found, a cure for my malady, yet it never seemed so much alleviated as while I was reading him. At length, I was advised by a very near and dear relative, to lay him aside; for he thought such an author more likely to nourish my disorder than to remove it.*

* A relative of Cowper's ought to have been the last to prohibit the perusal of Herbert's Poems, because Dr. John Donne, the pious and eminent Dean of St. Paul's, one of Cowper's ancestors, was the endeared friend of that holy man, to whom, not long before his death, he sent a seal, representing a figure of Christ extended upon an anchor, the emblem of Hope, to be kept as a memorial.

Isaak Walton bears the following expressive testimony to Herbert's Temple, or Sacred Poems.

"A book, in which by declaring his own spiritual conflicts, he hath comforted and raised many a dejected and discomposed soul, and charmed them into sweet and quiet thoughts: a book, by the frequent reading whereof, and the assistance of that Spirit that seemed to inspire the Author, the reader may attain habits of *peace* and *piety*, and all the gifts of the *Holy Ghost* and *Heaven:* and may, by still reading, still keep those sacred fires burning upon the altar of so pure a heart, as shall free it from the anxieties of this world, and keep it fixed upon things that are above."—*See Walton's Lives.*

In this state of mind I continued near a twelvemonth; when, having experienced the inefficacy of all human means, I at length betook myself to God in prayer; such is the rank which our Redeemer holds in our esteem, never resorted to but in the last instance, when all creatures have failed to succour us. My hard heart was at length softened; and my stubborn knees brought to bow. I composed a set of prayers, and made frequent use of them. Weak as my faith was, the Almighty, who will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax, was graciously pleased to hear me.

A change of scene was recommended to me; and I embraced an opportunity of going with some friends to Southampton, where I spent several months. Soon after our arrival, we walked to a place called Freemantle, about a mile from the town: the morning was clear and calm; the sun shone bright upon the sea; and the country on the borders of it was the most beautiful I had ever seen. We sat down upon an eminence, at the end of the arm of the sea, which runs between Southampton and the New Forest. Here it was, that, on a sudden, as if another sun had been kindled that instant in the heavens, on purpose to dispel sorrow and vexation of spirit, I felt the weight of all my misery taken off; my heart became light and joyful in a moment; I could have wept with transport had I been alone. I must needs believe that nothing less than the Almighty fiat could have filled me with such inexpressible delight; not by a gradual dawning of peace, but as it were with a flash of his life-

giving countenance. I think I remember something like a glow of gratitude to the Father of mercies for this unexpected blessing, and that I ascribed it to his gracious acceptance of my prayers. But Satan, and my own wicked heart, quickly persuaded me that I was indebted for my deliverance to nothing but a change of scene and the amusing varieties of the place. By this means he turned the blessing into a poison; teaching me to conclude, that nothing but a continued circle of diversion, and indulgence of appetite, could secure me from a relapse.*

Upon this false principle, as soon as I returned to London, I burnt my prayers, and away went all thoughts of devotion and dependence upon God my Saviour. Surely it was of his mercy that I was not consumed; glory be to his grace! Two deliverances from danger not making any impression, having spent about twelve years in the Temple, in

* We do not know a state of mind more to be deprecated than what is indicated in this passage. It is the science of self-tormenting, that withers every joy, and blights all our happiness. That Satan tempts is a scriptural truth; but the same divine authority also informs us, that "every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed:" James i. 14: that God suffereth no man to be tempted above what he is able, and that if we resist Satan he will flee from us. The mind that feels itself harassed by these mental temptations must take refuge in the promises of God, such as Isaiah xli. 10; xliii. 2; lix. 19; 2 Cor. xii. 9, and plead them in prayer. Resistance to temptation will weaken it, faith will overcome it, and the panoply of Heaven, if we be careful to gird ourselves with it, will secure us against all its inroads.

an uninterrupted course of sinful indulgence, and my associates and companions being either, like myself, professed Christians, or professed infidels, I obtained, at length, so complete a victory over my conscience, that all remonstrances from that quarter were in vain, and in a manner silenced; though sometimes, indeed, a question would arise in my mind, whether it were safe to proceed any farther in a course so plainly and utterly condemned in the word of God. I saw clearly that if the gospel were true, such a conduct must inevitably end in my destruction; but I saw not by what means I could change my Ethiopian complexion, or overcome such an inveterate habit of rebelling against God.

The next thing that occurred to me was a doubt whether the gospel were true or false. To this succeeded many an anxious wish for the decision of this important question; for I foolishly thought, that obedience would presently follow, were I but convinced that it was worth while to attempt it. Having no reason to expect a miracle, and not hoping to be satisfied with any thing less, I acquiesced, at length, in the force of that devilish conclusion, that the only course I could take to secure my present peace was to wink hard against the prospect of future misery, and to resolve to banish all thoughts of a subject, upon which I thought to so little purpose. Nevertheless, when I was in the company of deists, and heard the gospel blasphemed, I never failed to assert the truth of it with much vehemence of disputation; for which I was the better qualified, having been always an indus-

trious and diligent inquirer into the evidences by which it was externally supported. I think I once went so far into a controversy of this kind, as to assert, that I would gladly submit to have my right hand cut off, so that I might but be enabled to live according to the gospel. Thus have I been employed, when half intoxicated, in vindicating the truth of scripture, while in the very act of rebellion against its dictates. Lamentable inconsistency of a convinced judgment with an unsanctified heart! An inconsistency, indeed, evident to others as well as to myself, inasmuch as a deistical friend of mine, with whom I was disputing upon the subject, cut short the matter, by alleging that, if what I said were true, I was certainly lost by my own showing.

By this time, my patrimony being well nigh spent, and there being no appearance that I should ever repair the damage by a fortune of my own getting, I began to be a little apprehensive of approaching want. It was, I imagine, under some apprehensions of this kind, that I one day said to a friend of mine, if the clerk to the journals of the House of Lords should die, I had some hopes that my kinsman, who had the place in his disposal, would appoint me to succeed him. We both agreed that the business of that place, being transacted in private, would exactly suit me. Thus did I covet what God had commanded me not to covet. It pleased the Lord to give me my heart's desire, and with it an immediate punishment for my crime. The man died, and, by his death, not only the clerkship of the journals became vacant, but it became necessary to

appoint officers to two other places, jointly, as deputies to Mr. De Grey,* who at this time resigned. These were the office of reading clerk, and the clerkship of the committees, of much greater value than that of the journals. The patentee of these appointments (whom I pray to God to bless for his benevolent intention to serve me) called on me at my chambers, and, having invited me to take a turn with him in the garden, there made me an offer of the two most profitable places; intending the other for his friend Mr. A. Dazzled by so splendid a proposal, and not immediately reflecting upon my incapacity to execute a business of so public a nature, I at once accepted it; but at the same time (such was the will of Him whose hand was in the whole matter) seemed to receive a dagger in my heart. *The wound was given, and every moment added to the smart of it.* All the considerations, by which I endeavoured to compose my mind to its former tranquillity, did but torment me the more; proving miserable comforters and counsellors of no value. I returned to my chambers thoughtful and unhappy; my countenance fell; and my friend was astonished, instead of that additional cheerfulness he might so reasonably expect, to find an air of deep melancholy in all I said or did.

Having been harassed in this manner by day and night, for the space of a week, perplexed between the apparent folly of casting away the only visible chance I had of being well provided for and the im-

* Afterwards Lord Chief Justice, in the Court of Common Pleas, and created Lord Walsingham.

possibility of retaining it, I determined at length to write a letter to my friend, though he lodged in a manner at the next door, and we generally spent the day together. I did so, and therein begged him to accept my resignation, and to appoint Mr. A. to the places he had given me; and permit me to succeed Mr. A. I was well aware of the disproportion between the value of his appointment and mine; but my peace was gone; pecuniary advantages were not equivalent to what I had lost; and I flattered myself, that the clerkship of the journals would fall fairly and easily within the scope of my abilities. Like a man in a fever, I thought a change of posture would relieve my pain; and, as the event will show, was equally disappointed. At length I carried my point; my friend, in this instance, preferring the gratification of my desires to his own interest; for nothing could be so likely to bring a suspicion of bargain and sale upon his nomination, which the Lords would not have endured, as his appointment of so near a relative to the least profitable office, while the most valuable was allotted to a stranger.

The matter being thus settled, something like a calm took place in my mind. I was, indeed, not a little concerned about my character; being aware, that it must needs suffer by the strange appearance of my proceeding. This, however, being but a small part of the anxiety I had laboured under, was hardly felt, when the rest was taken off. I thought my path to an easy maintenance was now plain and

open, and for a day or two was tolerably cheerful. But, behold, the storm was gathering all the while; and the fury of it was not the less violent for this gleam of sunshine.

In the beginning, a strong opposition to my friend's right of nomination began to show itself. A powerful party was formed among the Lords to thwart it, in favour of an old enemy of the family, though one much indebted to its bounty; and it appeared plain that, if we succeeded at last, it would only be by fighting our ground by inches. Every advantage, I was told, would be sought for, and eagerly seized, to disconcert us. I was bid to expect an examination at the bar of the house, touching my sufficiency for the post I had taken. Being necessarily ignorant of the nature of that business, it became expedient that I should visit the office daily, in order to qualify myself for the strictest scrutiny. All the horror of my fears and perplexities now returned. A thunderbolt would have been as welcome to me as this intelligence. I knew, to demonstration, that upon these terms the clerkship of the journals was no place for me. To require my attendance at the bar of the House, that I might there publicly entitle myself to the office, was, in effect, to exclude me from it. In the mean time, the interest of my friend, the honour of his choice, my own reputation and circumstances, all urged me forward; all pressed me to undertake that which I saw to be impracticable. They whose spirits are formed like mine, to whom *a public exhi-*

bition of themselves, on any occasion, is mortal poison, may have some idea of the horrors of my situation; others can have none.

My continual misery at length brought on a nervous fever: quiet forsook me by day, and peace by night; a finger raised against me was more than I could stand against. In this posture of mind, I attended regularly at the office; where, instead of a soul upon the rack, the most active spirits were essentially necessary for my purpose. I expected no assistance from any body there, all the inferior clerks being under the influence of my opponent; and accordingly I received none. The journal books were indeed thrown open to me, a thing which could not be refused; and from which, perhaps, a man in health, and with a head turned to business, might have gained all the information he wanted; but it was not so with me. I read without perception, and was so distressed, that, had every clerk in the office been my friend, it could have availed me little; for I was not in a condition to receive instruction, much less to elicit it out of manuscripts, without direction. Many months went over me thus employed; constant in the use of means, despairing as to the issue.

The feelings of a man, when he arrives at the place of execution, are, probably, much like mine, every time I set my foot in the office, which was every day, for more than half a year together.

At length, the vacation being pretty far advanced, I made a shift to get into the country, and repaired to Margate. There, by the help of cheerful com-

pany, a new scene, and the intermission of my painful employment, I presently began to recover my spirits; though even here, for some time after my arrival, (notwithstanding, perhaps, that the preceding day had been spent agreeably, and without any disturbing recollection of my circumstances,) my first reflections, when I awoke in the morning, were horrible and full of wretchedness. I looked forward to the approaching winter, and regretted the flight of every moment which brought it nearer; like a man borne away by a rapid torrent into a stormy sea, whence he sees no possibility of returning, and where he knows he cannot subsist. At length, indeed, I acquired such a facility of turning away my thoughts from the ensuing crisis, that, for weeks together, I hardly adverted to it at all; but the stress of the tempest was yet to come, and was not to be avoided by any resolution of mine to look another way.

"How wonderful are the works of the Lord, and his ways past finding out!" Thus was he preparing me for an event, which I least of all expected, even the reception of his blessed gospel, working by means, which, in all human contemplation, must needs seem directly opposite to that purpose, but which, in his wise and gracious disposal, have, I trust, effectually accomplished it.

About the beginning of October 1763, I was again required to attend the office and prepare for the push. This no sooner took place, than all my misery returned; again I visited the scene of ineffectual labours; again I felt myself pressed by

necessity on either side, with nothing but despair in prospect. To this dilemma was I reduced, either to keep possession of the office to the last extremity, and by so doing expose myself to a public rejection for insufficiency; (for the little knowledge I had acquired would have quite forsaken me at the bar of the House;) or else to fling it up at once, and by this means run the hazard of ruining my benefactor's right of appointment, by bringing his discretion into question. In this situation, such a fit of passion has sometimes seized me, when alone in my chambers, that I have cried out aloud, and cursed the hour of my birth; lifting up my eyes to heaven, at the same time, not as a supplicant, but in the spirit of reproach against my Maker. A thought would sometimes come across my mind, that my sins had perhaps brought this distress upon me, that the hand of divine vengeance was in it; but in the pride of my heart I presently acquitted myself, and thereby implicitly charged God with injustice, saying, "What sins have I committed to deserve this?"

I saw plainly that God alone could deliver me; but was firmly persuaded that he would not, and therefore omitted to ask it. Indeed at *his* hands, I would not; but as Saul sought to the witch, so did I to the physician, Dr. Heberden; and was as diligent in the use of drugs, as if they would have healed my wounded spirit, or have made the rough places plain before me. I made, indeed, one effort of a devotional kind; for, having found a prayer or

two, I said them a few nights, but with so little expectation of prevailing that way, that I soon laid aside the book, and with it all thoughts of God and hopes of a remedy.

I now began to look upon madness as the only chance remaining. I had a strong kind of foreboding that so it would one day fare with me; and I wished for it earnestly, and looked forward to it with impatient expectation. My chief fear was, that my senses would not fail me time enough to excuse my appearance at the bar of the House of Lords, which was the only purpose I wanted it to answer. Accordingly, the day of decision drew near, and I was still in my senses; though in my heart I had formed many wishes, and by word of mouth expressed many expectations to the contrary.

Now came the grand temptation; the point to which Satan had all the while been driving me. I grew more sullen and reserved, fled from all society, even from my most intimate friends, and shut myself up in my chambers. The ruin of my fortune, the contempt of my relations and acquaintance, the prejudice I should do my patron, were all urged on me with irresistible energy. Being reconciled to the apprehension of madness, I began to be reconciled to the apprehension of death. Though formerly, in my happiest hours, I had never been able to glance a single thought that way, without shuddering at the idea of dissolution, I now wished for it, and found myself but little

shocked at the idea of procuring it myself. I considered life as my property, and therefore at my own disposal. Men of great name, I observed, had destroyed themselves; and the world still retained the profoundest respect for their memories.

[An imperative sense of duty compels me to throw a veil over the afflicting details which follow. Respect for the known wishes of my departed brother-in-law, a desire not to wound the feelings of living characters, and a consciousness that such disclosures are not suited to meet the public eye, confirm me in this resolution. It may be said the facts are accessible, and may be known; why make a mystery of communicating them? My answer is, I am a father, I will not inflict a shock on the youthful minds of my own children, neither will I be instrumental in conveying it to those of others. I will make such use of the Memoir as may answer the purpose I have in view, but I will not be the medium of revealing the secrets of the prison-house. It is sufficient to state that Cowper meditated the crime of self-destruction, and that he was arrested in his purpose by an Almighty arm. To quote his own emphatic words, "Unless my Eternal Father in Christ Jesus had interposed to disannul my covenant with death, and my agreement with hell, that I might hereafter be admitted into the covenant of mercy, I had by this time been the just object of his boundless vengeance."

All expectation of being able to hold the office

in Parliament being now at an end, he dispatched a friend to his relative at the coffee-house.]

As soon, he observes, as the latter arrived, I apprised him of the attempt I had been making.—His words were, "My dear Mr. Cowper, you terrify me; to be sure you cannot hold the office at this rate,—where is the deputation?" I gave him the key of the drawers where it was deposited; and, his business requiring his immediate attendance, he took it away with him; and thus ended all my connexion with the Parliament House.

To this moment I had felt no concern of a spiritual kind. Ignorant of original sin, insensible of the guilt of actual transgression, I understood neither the law nor the gospel; the condemning nature of the one, nor the restoring mercies of the other. I was as much unacquainted with Christ, in all his saving offices, as if his blessed name had never reached me. Now, therefore, a new scene opened upon me. Conviction of sin took place, especially of that just committed; the meanness of it, as well as its atrocity, were exhibited to me in colours so inconceivably strong, that I despised myself, with a contempt not to be imagined or expressed, for having attempted it. This sense of it secured me from the repetition of a crime, which I could not now reflect on without abhorrence.

A sense of God's wrath, and a deep despair of escaping it, instantly succeeded. The fear of death became much more prevalent in me than ever the desire of it had been.

A frequent flashing, like that of fire, before my eyes, and an excessive pressure upon the brain, made me apprehensive of an apoplexy.

By the advice of my dear friend and benefactor, who called upon me again at noon, I sent for a physician, and told him the fact, and the stroke I apprehended. He assured me there was no danger of it, and advised me by all means to retire into the country. Being made easy in that particular, and not knowing where to better myself, I continued in my chambers, where the solitude of my situation left me at full liberty to attend to my spiritual state; a matter I had till this day never sufficiently thought of.

At this time I wrote to my brother, at Cambridge, to inform him of the distress I had been in, and the dreadful method I had taken to deliver myself from it; assuring him, as I faithfully might, that I had laid aside all such horrid intentions, and was desirous to live as long as it would please the Almighty to permit me.

My sins were now set in array against me, and I began to see and feel that I had lived without God in the world. As I walked to and fro in my chamber, I said within myself, "*There never was so abandoned a wretch, so great a sinner.*" All my worldly sorrows seemed as though they had never been; the terrors which succeeded them seemed so great and so much more afflicting. One moment I thought myself shut out from mercy by one chapter; the next by another. The sword of the Spirit seemed to guard the tree of life from my

touch, and to flame against me in every avenue by which I attempted to approach it. I particularly remember, that the parable of the barren fig-tree was to me an inconceivable source of anguish; and I applied it to myself, with a strong persuasion in my mind that, when the Saviour pronounced a curse upon it, he had me in his eye, and pointed that curse directly at me.

I turned over all Archbishop Tillotson's sermons, in hopes to find one upon the subject, and consulted my brother upon the true meaning of it; desirous, if possible, to obtain a different interpretation of the matter than my evil conscience would suffer me to fasten on it. "O Lord, thou didst vex me with all thy storms, all thy billows went over me; thou didst run upon me like a giant in the night season, thou didst scare me with visions in the night season."

In every book I opened, I found something that struck me to the heart. I remember taking up a volume of Beaumont and Fletcher, which lay upon the table in my kinsman's lodgings, and the first sentence which I saw was this: "The justice of the gods is in it." My heart instantly replied, "It is a truth;" and I cannot but observe, that as I found something in every author to condemn me, so it was the first sentence, in general, I pitched upon. Every thing preached to me, and every thing preached the curse of the law.

I was now strongly tempted to use laudanum, not as a poison, but as an opiate, to compose my spirits; to stupify my awakened and feeling mind, harassed

with sleepless nights and days of uninterrupted misery. But God forbad it, who would have nothing to interfere with the quickening work he had begun in me; and neither the want of rest, nor continued agony of mind, could bring me to the use of it: I hated and abhorred the very smell of it.

Having an obscure notion about the efficacy of faith, I resolved upon an experiment to prove whether I had faith or not. For this purpose, I resolved to repeat the Creed: when I came to the second period of it, all traces of the former were struck out of my memory, nor could I recollect one syllable of the matter. While I endeavoured to recover it, and when just upon the point, I perceived a sensation in my brain, like a tremulous vibration in all the fibres of it. By this means I lost the words in the very instant when I thought to have laid hold of them. This threw me into an agony; but, growing a little calmer, I made an attempt for the third time; here again I failed in the same manner as before.

In this condition my brother found me, and the first words I spoke to him were, "Oh! brother, I am lost! think of eternity, and then think what it is to be lost!" I had, indeed, a sense of eternity impressed upon my mind, which seemed almost to amount to a full comprehension of it.

My brother, pierced to the heart with the sight of my misery, tried to comfort me, but all to no purpose. I refused comfort, and my mind appeared to me in such colours, that to administer it to me was only to exasperate me, and to mock my fears.

At length, I remembered my friend Martin Madan, and sent for him. I used to think him an enthusiast, but now seemed convinced that, if there was any balm in Gilead, he must administer it to me. On former occasions, when my spiritual concerns had at any time occurred to me, I thought likewise on the necessity of repentance. I knew that many persons had spoken of shedding tears for sin; but, when I asked myself, whether the time would ever come when I should weep for mine, it seemed to me that a stone might sooner do it.

Not knowing that Christ was exalted to give repentance, I despaired of ever attaining to it. My friend came to me; we sat on the bed-side together, and he began to declare to me the gospel. He spoke of original sin, and the corruption of every man born into the world, whereby every one is a child of wrath. I perceived something like hope dawning in my heart. This doctrine set me more on a level with the rest of mankind, and made my condition appear less desperate.

Next he insisted on the all-atoning efficacy of the blood of Jesus, and his righteousness, for our justification. While I heard this part of his discourse, and the scriptures on which he founded it, my heart began to burn within me; my soul was pierced with a sense of my bitter ingratitude to so merciful a Saviour; and those tears, which I thought impossible, burst forth freely. I saw clearly that my case required such a remedy, and had not the least doubt within me but that this was the gospel of salvation.

Lastly, he urged the necessity of a lively faith in Jesus Christ; not an assent only of the understanding, but a faith of application, an actually laying hold of it, and embracing it as a salvation wrought out for me personally. Here I failed, and deplored my want of such a faith. He told me it was the gift of God, which he trusted he would bestow upon me. I could only reply, "I wish he would:" a very irreverent petition;* but a very sincere one, and such as the blessed God, in his due time, was pleased to answer.

My brother, finding that I had received consolation from Mr. Madan, was very anxious that I should take the earliest opportunity of conversing with him again; and, for this purpose, pressed me to go to him immediately. I was for putting it off, but my brother seemed impatient of delay; and, at length, prevailed on me to set out. I mention this, to the honour of his candour and humanity; which would suffer no difference of sentiments to interfere with them. My welfare was his only object, and all prejudices fled before his zeal to procure it. May he receive, for his recompense, all that happiness the gospel, which I then first became acquainted with, is alone able to impart!

Easier, indeed, I was, but far from easy. The wounded spirit within me was less in pain, but by no means healed. What I had experienced was but the beginning of sorrows, and a long train of still greater terrors was at hand. I slept my three hours

* It could hardly be called irreverent, unless the manner in which it was uttered rendered it such.

well, and then awoke with ten times a stronger alienation from God than ever.

At eleven o'clock, my brother called upon me, and, in about an hour after his arrival, that distemper of mind, which I had so ardently wished for, actually seized me.

While I traversed the apartment, expecting every moment that the earth would open her mouth and swallow me, my conscience scaring me, and the city of refuge out of reach and out of sight, a strange and horrible darkness fell upon me. If it were possible that a heavy blow could light on the brain, without touching the skull, such was the sensation I felt. I clapped my hand to my forehead, and cried aloud, through the pain it gave me. At every stroke my thoughts and expressions became more wild and incoherent; all that remained clear was the sense of sin, and the expectation of punishment. These kept undisturbed possession all through my illness, without interruption or abatement.

My brother instantly observed the change, and consulted with my friends on the best manner to dispose of me. It was agreed among them, that I should be carried to St. Alban's, where Dr. Cotton kept a house for the reception of such patients, and with whom I was known to have a slight acquaintance. Not only his skill as a physician recommended him to their choice, but his well-known humanity and sweetness of temper. It will be proper to draw a veil over the secrets of my prison-house: let it suffice to say, that the low state of body and mind to which I was reduced was per-

fectly well calculated to humble the natural vain-glory and pride of my heart.

These are the efficacious means which Infinite Wisdom thought meet to make use of for that purpose. A sense of self-loathing and abhorrence ran through all my insanity. Conviction of sin, and expectation of instant judgment, never left me, from the 7th of December 1763, until the middle of July following. The accuser of the brethren was ever busy with me night and day, bringing to my recollection in dreams the commission of long-forgotten sins, and charging upon my conscience things of an indifferent nature as atrocious crimes.

All that passed in this long interval of eight months may be classed under two heads, conviction of sin, and despair of mercy. But, blessed be the God of my salvation for every sigh I drew, for every tear I shed; since thus it pleased him to judge me here, that I might not be judged hereafter.

After five months of continual expectation that the divine vengeance would overtake me, I became so familiar with despair as to have contracted a sort of hardiness and indifference as to the event. I began to persuade myself that, while the execution of the sentence was suspended, it would be for my interest to indulge a less horrible train of ideas than I had been accustomed to muse upon. By the means I entered into conversation with the Doctor, laughed at his stories, and told him some of my own to match them; still, however, carrying a sentence of irrevocable doom in my heart.

He observed the seeming alteration with pleasure.

Believing, as well he might, that my smiles were sincere, he thought my recovery well nigh completed; but they were, in reality, like the green surface of a morass, pleasant to the eye, but a cover for nothing but rottenness and filth. *The only thing that could promote and effectuate my cure was yet wanting; an experimental knowledge of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.*

In about three months more (July 25, 1764) my brother came from Cambridge to visit me. Dr. C. having told him that he thought me greatly amended, he was rather disappointed at finding me almost as silent and reserved as ever; for the first sight of him struck me with many painful sensations both of sorrow for my own remediless condition and envy of his happiness.

As soon as we were left alone, he asked me how I found myself; I answered, "As much better as despair can make me." We went together into the garden. Here, on expressing a settled assurance of sudden judgment, he protested to me that it was all a delusion; and protested so strongly, that I could not help giving some attention to him. I burst into tears, and cried out, "If it be a delusion, then am I the happiest of beings." Something like a ray of hope was shot into my heart; but still I was afraid to indulge it. We dined together, and I spent the afternoon in a more cheerful manner. Something seemed to whisper to me every moment, 'Still there is mercy."

Even after he left me, this change of sentiment gathered ground continually; yet my mind was in

such a fluctuating state, that I can only call it a vague presage of better things at hand, without being able to assign a reason for it. The servant observed a sudden alteration in me for the better; and the man, whom I have ever since retained in my service,* expressed great joy on the occasion.

I went to bed and slept well. In the morning, I dreamed that the sweetest boy I ever saw came dancing up to my bedside; he seemed just out of leading-strings, yet I took particular notice of the firmness and steadiness of his tread. The sight affected me with pleasure, and served at least to harmonize my spirits; so that I awoke for the first time with a sensation of delight on my mind. Still, however, I knew not where to look for the establishment of the comfort I felt; my joy was as much a mystery to myself as to those about me. The blessed God was preparing for me the clearer light of his countenance, by this first dawning of that light upon me.

Within a few days of my first arrival at St. Alban's, I had thrown aside the word of God, as a book in which I had no longer any interest or portion. The only instance, in which I can recollect reading a single chapter, was about two months before my recovery. Having found a Bible on the bench in the garden, I opened upon the 11th of St. John, where Lazarus is raised from the dead; and saw so much benevolence, mercy, goodness, and sympathy, with miserable man, in our Saviour's conduct, that I almost shed tears even after the rela-

* Samuel Roberts.

tion; little thinking that it was an exact type of the mercy which Jesus was on the point of extending towards myself. I sighed, and said, "Oh, that I had not rejected so good a Redeemer, that I had not forfeited all his favours!" Thus was my heart softened, though not yet enlightened. I closed the book, without intending to open it again.

Having risen with somewhat of a more cheerful feeling, I repaired to my room, where breakfast waited for me. While I sat at table, I found the cloud of horror, which had so long hung over me, was every moment passing away; and every moment came fraught with hope. I was continually more and more persuaded that I was not utterly doomed to destruction. The way of salvation was still, however, hid from my eyes; nor did I see it at all clearer than before my illness. I only thought that, if it would please God to spare me, I would lead a better life; and that I would yet escape hell, if a religious observance of my duty would secure me from it.

Thus may the terror of the Lord make a pharisee; but only the sweet voice of mercy in the gospel can make a Christian.

[We are now arrived at the eventful crisis of Cowper's conversion and restoration, which is thus recorded in his own words.]

But the happy period which was to shake off my fetters, and afford me a clear opening of the free mercy of God in Christ Jesus, was now arrived. I flung myself into a chair near the window, and,

seeing a Bible there, ventured once more to apply to it for comfort and instruction. The first verse I saw was the 25th of the 3rd of Romans; "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God."

Immediately I received strength to believe it, and the full beams of the Sun of Righteousness shone upon me. I saw the sufficiency of the atonement he had made, my pardon sealed in his blood, and all the fulness and completeness of his justification. In a moment I believed, and received the gospel. Whatever my friend Madan had said to me, long before, revived in all its clearness, with demonstration of the Spirit and with power. Unless the almighty arm had been under me, I think I should have died with gratitude and joy. My eyes filled with tears, and my voice choked with transport, I could only look up to heaven in silent fear, overwhelmed with love and wonder. But the work of the Holy Ghost is best described in his own words, it is "joy unspeakable, and full of glory." Thus was my heavenly Father in Christ Jesus pleased to give me the full assurance of faith, and out of a strong, stony, unbelieving heart, to raise up a child unto Abraham. How glad should I now have been to have spent every moment in prayer and thanksgiving!

I lost no opportunity of repairing to a throne of grace; but flew to it with an earnestness irresistible and never to be satisfied. Could I help it? Could

I do otherwise than love and rejoice in my reconciled Father in Christ Jesus? The Lord had enlarged my heart, and I ran in the way of his commandments. For many succeeding weeks, tears were ready to flow, if I did but speak of the gospel, or mention the name of Jesus. To rejoice day and night was all my employment. Too happy to sleep much, I thought it was but lost time that was spent in slumber. O that the ardour of my first love had continued! But I have known many a lifeless and unhallowed hour since; long intervals of darkness, interrupted by short returns of peace and joy in believing.

My physician, ever watchful and apprehensive for my welfare, was now alarmed, lest the sudden transition from despair to joy should terminate in a fatal frenzy. But "the Lord was my strength and my song, and was become my salvation." I said, "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord; he has chastened me sore, but not given me over unto death. O give thanks unto the Lord, for his mercy endureth for ever."

In a short time, Dr. C. became satisfied, and acquiesced in the soundness of my cure: and much sweet communion I had with him, concerning the things of our salvation. He visited me every morning while I staid with him, which was near twelve months after my recovery, and the gospel was the delightful theme of our conversation.

No trial has befallen me since, but what might be expected in a state of warfare. Satan, indeed, has changed his battery. Before my conversion, sensual

gratification was the weapon with which he sought to destroy me. Being naturally of an easy, quiet disposition, I was seldom tempted to anger; yet that passion it is which now gives me the most disturbance, and occasions the sharpest conflicts. But, Jesus being my strength, I fight against it; and if I am not conqueror, yet I am not overcome.

I now employed my brother to seek out an abode for me in the neighbourhood of Cambridge, being determined, by the Lord's leave, to see London, the scene of my former abominations, no more. I had still one place of preferment left, which seemed to bind me under the necessity of returning thither again. But I resolved to break the bond, chiefly because my peace of conscience was in question. I held, for some years, the office of commissioner of bankrupts, with about 60*l.* per annum. Conscious of my ignorance of the law, I could not take the accustomed oath, and resigned it; thereby releasing myself from an occasion of great sin, and every obligation to return to London. By this means, I reduced myself to an income scarcely sufficient for my maintenance; but I would rather have starved in reality than deliberately offend against my Saviour; and his great mercy has since raised me up such friends, as have enabled me to enjoy all the comforts and conveniences of life. I am well assured that, while I live, "bread shall be given me, and water shall be sure," according to his gracious promise.

After my brother had made many unsuccessful

attempts to procure me a dwelling near him, I one day poured out my soul in prayer to God, beseeching him that, wherever he should be pleased, in his fatherly mercy, to lead me, it might be in the society of those who feared his name, and loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity; a prayer of which I have good reason to acknowledge his gracious acceptance.

In the beginning of June 1765, I received a letter from my brother, to say, he had taken lodgings for me at Huntingdon, which he believed would suit me. Though it was sixteen miles from Cambridge, I was resolved to take them; for I had been two months in perfect health, and my circumstances required a less expensive way of life. It was with great reluctance, however, that I thought of leaving the place of my second nativity; I had so much leisure there to study the blessed word of God, and had enjoyed so much happiness; but God ordered every thing for me like an indulgent Father, and had prepared a more comfortable place of residence than I could have chosen for myself.

On the 7th of June 1765, having spent more than eighteen months at St. Alban's, partly in bondage, and partly in the liberty wherewith Christ had made me free, I took my leave of the place at four in the morning, and set out for Cambridge.

The servant, whom I lately mentioned as rejoicing in my recovery, attended me. He had maintained such an affectionate watchfulness over me during my whole illness, and waited on me with so much

patience and gentleness, that I could not bear to leave him behind, though it was with some difficulty the Doctor was prevailed on to part with him. The strongest argument of all was the earnest desire he expressed to follow me. He seemed to have been providentially thrown in my way, having entered Dr. C.'s service just time enough to attend me; and I have strong ground to hope, that God will use me as an instrument to bring him to a knowledge of Jesus. It is impossible to say with how delightful a sense of his protection and fatherly care of me, it has pleased the Almighty to favour me, during the whole journey.

I remembered the pollution which is in the world, and the sad share I had in it myself; and my heart ached at the thought of entering it again. The blessed God had endued me with some concern for his glory, and I was fearful of hearing it traduced by oaths and blasphemies, the common language of this highly favoured, but ungrateful country.* But "fear not, I am with thee," was my comfort. I passed the whole journey in silent communion with God; and those hours are amongst the happiest I have known.

I repaired to Huntingdon the Saturday after my arrival at Cambridge. My brother, who had attended me thither, had no sooner left me than, find-

* There is a considerable improvement in public manners since this period, and oaths and blasphemies would not be tolerated in well-bred society. May the hallowed influence of the Gospel be instrumental in producing a still happier change!

ing myself surrounded by strangers and in a strange place, my spirits began to sink, and I felt (such were the backslidings of my heart) like a traveller in the midst of an inhospitable desert, without a friend to comfort or a guide to direct me. I walked forth, towards the close of the day, in this melancholy frame of mind, and, having wandered about a mile from the town, I found my heart, at length, so powerfully drawn towards the Lord, that, having gained a retired and secret nook in the corner of a field, I kneeled down under a bank, and poured forth my complaints before him. It pleased my Saviour to hear me, in that this oppression was taken off, and I was enabled to trust in him that careth for the stranger, to roll my burden upon him, and to rest assured that, wheresoever he might cast my lot, the God of all consolation would still be with me. But this was not all. He did for me more than either I had asked or thought.

The next day, I went to church for the first time after my recovery. Throughout the whole service, I had much to do to restrain my emotions, so fully did I see the beauty and the glory of the Lord. My heart was full of love to all the congregation, especially to them in whom I observed an air of sober attention. A grave and sober person sat in the pew with me; him I have since seen and often conversed with, and have found him a pious man, and a true servant of the blessed Redeemer. While he was singing the psalm, I looked at him, and, observing him intent on his holy employment, I could not help saying in my heart, with much emotion,

"Bless you, for praising him whom my soul loveth!"

Such was the goodness of the Lord to me, that he gave me "the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;" and though my voice was silent, being stopt by the intenseness of what I felt, yet my soul sung within me, and even leapt for joy. And when the gospel for the day was read, the sound of it was more than I could well support. Oh, what a word is the word of God, when the Spirit quickens us to receive it, and gives the hearing ear, and the understanding heart! The harmony of heaven is in it, and discovers its author. The parable of the prodigal son was the portion. I saw myself in that glass so clearly, and the loving-kindness of my slighted and forgotten Lord, that the whole scene was realized to me, and acted over in my heart.

I went immediately after church to the place where I had prayed the day before, and found the relief I had there received was but the earnest of a richer blessing. How shall I express what the Lord did for me, except by saying, that he made all his goodness to pass before me! I seemed to speak to him face to face, as a man conversing with his friend, except that my speech was only in tears of joy, and groanings which cannot be uttered. I could say, indeed, with Jacob, not "how dreadful," but how lovely, "is this place! This is none other than the house of God."

Four months I continued in my lodging. Some few of the neighbours came to see me, but their

visits were not very frequent; and, in general, I had but little intercourse, except with my God in Christ Jesus. It was he who made my solitude sweet, and the wilderness to bloom and blossom as the rose; and my meditation of him was so delightful that, if I had few other comforts, neither did I want any.

One day, however, towards the expiration of this period, I found myself in a state of desertion. That communion which I had so long been able to maintain with the Lord was suddenly interrupted. I began to dislike my solitary situation, and to fear I should never be able to weather out the winter in so lonely a dwelling. Suddenly a thought struck me, which I shall not fear to call a suggestion of the good providence which had brought me to Huntingdon. A few months before, I had formed an acquaintance with the Rev. Mr. Unwin's family. His son, though he had heard that I rather declined society than sought it, and though Mrs. Unwin herself dissuaded him from visiting me on that account, was yet so strongly inclined to it, that, notwithstanding all objections and arguments to the contrary, he one day engaged himself, as we were coming out of church, after morning prayers, to drink tea with me that afternoon. To my inexpressible joy, I found him one whose notions of religion were spiritual and lively; one whom the Lord had been training up from his infancy for the service of the temple. We opened our hearts to each other at the first interview, and, when we parted, I immediately retired to my chamber, and

prayed the Lord, who had been the author to be the guardian of our friendship, and to grant to it fervency and perpetuity, even unto death: and I doubt not that my gracious Father heard this prayer also.

The Sunday following I dined with him. That afternoon, while the rest of the family was withdrawn, I had much discourse with Mrs. Unwin. I am not at liberty to describe the pleasure I had in conversing with her, because she will be one of the first who will have the perusal of this narrative. Let it suffice to say, I found we had one faith, and had been baptized with the same baptism.

When I returned home, I gave thanks to God, who had so graciously answered my prayers, by bringing me into the society of Christians. She has since been a means in the hand of God of supporting, quickening, and strengthening me, in my walk with him. It was long before I thought of any other connexion with this family, than as a friend and neighbour. On the day, however, above mentioned, while I was revolving in my mind the nature of my situation, and beginning, for the first time, to find an irksomeness in such retirement, suddenly it occurred to me, that I might probably find a place in Mr. Unwin's family as a boarder. A young gentleman, who had lived with him as a pupil, was the day before gone to Cambridge. It appeared to me, at least, possible, that I might be allowed to succeed him. From the moment this thought struck me, such a tumult of anxious solicitude seized me, that for

two or three days I could not divert my mind to any other subject. I blamed and condemned myself for want of submission to the Lord's will; but still the language of my mutinous and disobedient heart was, "Give me the blessing, or else I die."

About the third evening after I had determined upon this measure, I, at length, made shift to fasten my thoughts upon a theme which had no manner of connexion with it. While I was pursuing my meditations, Mr. Unwin and family quite out of sight, my attention was suddenly called home again by the words which had been continually playing in my mind, and were, at length, repeated with such importunity that I could not help regarding them:— "The Lord God of truth will do this." I was effectually convinced, that they were not of my own production, and accordingly I received from them some assurance of success; but my unbelief and fearfulness robbed me of much of the comfort they were intended to convey; though I have since had many a blessed experience of the same kind, for which I can never be sufficiently thankful. I immediately began to negociate the affair, and in a few days it was entirely concluded.

I took possession of my new abode, Nov. 11, 1765. I have found it a place of rest prepared for me by God's own hand, where he has blessed me with a thousand mercies, and instances of his fatherly protection; and where he has given me abundant means of furtherance in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus, both by the study of his own word, and com-

munion with his dear disciples. May nothing but death interrupt our union!

Peace be with the reader, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen!

Painful as this Memoir is in some of its earlier details, yet we know nothing more simple and beautiful in narrative, more touching and ingenuous in sentiment, than its happy sequel and consummation. It resembles the storm that desolates the plain, but which is afterwards succeeded by the glowing beauties of the renovated landscape. No document ever furnished an ampler refutation of the remark that ascribes his malady to the operation of religious causes. On the contrary, it appears that his first relief, under the tyranny of an unfeeling schoolboy, was in the exercise of prayer, and that some of his happiest moments, in the enjoyment of the Divine presence, were experienced in the frame of mind which he describes, when at Southampton—that in proportion as he forgot the heavenly Monitor, his peace vanished, his passions resumed the ascendency, and he presented an unhappy compound of guilt and wretchedness. The history of his malady is developed in his own Memoir with all the clearness of the most circumstantial evidence. A morbid temperament laid the foundation; an extreme susceptibility exposed him to continual nervous irritation; and early disappointments deepened the impression. At length, with a mind unoccupied by study, and undisciplined by self-command—contemplating a "public exhibition of himself as mortal

poison," he sunk under an offer which a more buoyant spirit would have grasped as an object of honourable ambition. In this state religion found him, and administered the happy cure.

That a morbid temperament was the originating cause of his depression is confirmed by an affecting passage in one of his poems.

In the beautiful and much admired lines on his mother's picture, there is the following pathetic remark:

> My mother! when I learn'd that thou wast dead,
> Say, wast thou conscious of the tears I shed?
> Hover'd thy spirit o'er thy sorrowing son,
> *Wretch even then, life's journey just begun?*

In dwelling on these predisposing causes, the Editor thinks it right to state, in the most unequivocal manner, that there is not the remotest reason for supposing that any hereditary malady existed in the family of Cowper sufficient to account for this afflicting dispensation. There was an inflammatory action of his blood, and peculiar irritability of the nervous system, which a wise and salutary self-control and the early influence of religious principles might have subdued, or at least modified. Employment, also, or the active exercise of the faculties, seems indispensable to health and happiness.* He who lives without an allotted occupation is seldom either wise, virtuous, or happy. The mind recoils upon itself, and is consumed by its own fires. Providence, after the Fall, in mercy, not less

* Cowper adopted a profession, but never pursued it with perseverance.

than in justice, decreed that man s .ould live by the sweat of his brow; that, in the same moment that he was reminded of his punishment, he might find the toil itself a powerful alleviation to his sufferings, and the exercise of all his faculties the road to competency, to usefulness, and honour.

Two events contributed to exercise a most injurious influence on the morbid mind of Cowper, not recorded in his own Memoir. We allude to the death of his friend Sir William Russel, and his hopeless attachment to Miss Theodora Cowper.

Sir William was the contemporary of Cowper at Westminster, and his most intimate friend. This intercourse was continued in their riper years, on the footing of the most endearing friendship. Unhappily, young Russel was cut off by a premature death, while bathing in the Thames, amidst all the opening prospects of life, and with accomplishments and virtues that adorned his rank and station. This occurrence inflicted a great moral shock on the sensitive mind of Cowper.

But it was his attachment to Miss Theodora Jane Cowper that formed the eventful æra in his early life, and clouded all his future prospects. The relation of this fact is wholly omitted by Hayley, in compliance, we presume, with the express wishes of the family. It was, indeed, understood to be a prohibited subject, and involved in much mystery. The name of this lady was never uttered by Cowper, nor mentioned in his presence; and, after his death, delicacy towards the survivor equally imposed the duty of silence. The brother-in-law of the Editor,

the Rev. Dr. Johnson, conscious that a correspondence must have existed between the poet and the fair object of his attachment, requested to know whether he could be furnished with any documents, and permitted without a violation of delicacy to lay them before the public. The writer also was commissioned by him to solicit an interview, and to urge the same request, but without success. An intimation was at length conveyed that no documents could see the light till after the decease of the owner. The death of this lady, in the year 1824, at a very advanced age, removed the veil of secrecy, though the leading facts were known by a small circle of friends, through the confidential communications of Lady Hesketh and Dr. Johnson. We now proceed to the details of this transaction. Miss Theodora Cowper was the second daughter of Ashley Cowper, Esq., the poet's uncle, and sister to Lady Hesketh; she was, consequently, own cousin to Cowper. She is described as having been a young lady possessed of great personal attractions, highly accomplished, and distinguished by the qualities that engage affection and regard. It is no wonder that a person of Cowper's susceptibility yielded to so powerful an influence. She soon became the theme of his poetical effusions, which have since been communicated to the public.* They are juvenile compositions, but interesting, as forming the earliest productions of his muse, and recording his attachment to his cousin. Miss Theodora Cow-

* Poems, the early productions of William Cowper.

per was by no means insensible to the regards of her admirer, and the father was eventually solicited to ratify her choice. But Mr. Ashley Cowper, attached as he was to his nephew, and anxious to promote the happiness of his daughter, could by no means be induced to listen to the proposition. His objections were founded, first, on the near degree of relationship in which they stood to each other; and secondly, on the inadequacy of Cowper's fortune. From this resolution no entreaty could induce him to depart. The poet therefore was compelled to cherish a hopeless passion, which no lapse of time was capable of effacing; and his fair cousin, on her part, discovered a corresponding fidelity.

The subsequent melancholy event, recorded in the Memoir, at once extinguished all further hopes on the subject.

How powerfully his feelings were affected by the death of his friend, Sir William, and by his disappointment in love, may be seen by the following pathetic lines, referring to Miss Theodora Cowper.

Doom'd as I am, in solitude to waste
The present moments, and regret the past;
Depriv'd of every joy I valued most,
My friend torn from me, and my mistress lost;
Call not this gloom I wear, this anxious mien,
The dull effect of humour, or of spleen!
Still, still, I mourn with each returning day,
Him, snatch'd by fate in early youth away;
And her—through tedious years of doubt and pain
Fix'd in her choice, and faithful—but in vain!
O prone to pity, generous, and sincere,
Whose eye ne'er yet refus'd the wretch a tear;

Whose heart the real claim of friendship knows,
Nor thinks a lover's are but fancied woes;
See me—ere yet my destin'd course half done,
Cast forth a wand'rer on a world unknown!
See me neglected on the world's rude coast,
Each dear companion of my voyage lost!

Such were the preparatory causes that weakened and depressed the mind of Cowper. *The immediate and exciting cause* of his unhappy derangement has already been faithfully disclosed, as well as the occasion that ministered to its cure.

Pursuing this interesting and yet painful subject in the order of events, it appears that, after spending nearly ten years in the enjoyment of much inward peace, he was visited in the year 1773, at Olney, with a return, not of his original derangement, but with a severe nervous fever, and a settled depression of spirits. This attack began to subside at the close of the year 1776, though his full powers were not recovered till some time after. What he suffered is feelingly expressed in a letter to Mr. Hill. "Other distempers only batter the walls; but *they* (nervous fevers) creep silently into the citadel, and put the garrison to the sword."*

The death of his brother, the Rev. John Cowper, may have been instrumental to this long indisposition. At the same time we think that his situation at Olney was by no means favourable to his health; and that more time should have been allotted for relaxation and exercise.

In January 1787, he experienced a fresh attack,

* Vol. i. p. 125.

though surrounded by the beautiful scenery of Weston; which seems to prove that local causes were not so influential as some have suggested. A much better reason may be assigned in the lamented death of his endeared friend Mr. Unwin. This illness continued eight months, and greatly enfeebled his health and spirits. "This last tempest," he remarks, in a letter to Mr. Newton, "has left my nerves in a worse condition than it found them; my head especially, though better informed, is more infirm than ever." * In December 1791, Mrs. Unwin experienced her first attack; and in May 1792, it was renewed with aggravated symptoms, during Hayley's visit to Weston. He describes its powerful effect on Cowper's nerves in expressive language, and none can be more expressive than his own, at the close of the same year. "The year ninety-two shall stand chronicled in my remembrance as the most melancholy that I have ever known, except the few weeks that I spent at Eartham." † Cowper's mental depression kept pace with the spectacle of her increasing imbecility, till at length, yielding to the pressure of these accumulating sorrows, he sunk under the violence of the shock.

The coincidence of these facts is worthy of observation, as they seem to prove that the embers of the original constitutional malady never became extinct, and required only some powerful stimulant to revive the flame. Religious feelings unquestionably concurred, because whatever predominates in the mind furnishes the materials of excitement;

* Vol. iii. *p. 263.* † See Letter, Dec. 26, 1792.

but it was not the religion of a creed, for what creed ever proclaimed the delusion under which Cowper laboured?* His persuasion was in opposition to his creed, for he knew that he was once saved, and yet believed that he should be lost, though his creed assured him that, where divine grace had once revealed its saving power, it never failed to perfect its work in mercy—that the Saviour's love is unchangeable, and that whom he hath loved he loveth unto the end. (John xiii. 1.) His case therefore was an exception to his creed, and consequently must be imputed to the operation of other causes.

We trust we have now succeeded in tracing to its true source the origin of Cowper's malady, and that the numerous facts which have been urged must preclude the possibility of future misconception.

There are some distinguishing features in this mysterious malady which are too extraordinary not to be specified. We notice the following:

1st. The free exercise of his mental powers continued during the whole period of his depression, with the exception of two intervals, from 1773 to 1776, and a season of eight months in the year 1787. With these intermissions of study, all his works were written in moments of depression and unceasing nervous excitement.

It still further shows the singular mechanism of

* Cowper believed that he had incurred the Divine displeasure, because he did not commit the crime of self-destruction; a persuasion so manifestly absurd as to afford undeniable proof of derangement.

his wonderful mind, that his Montes Glaciales, or Ice Islands, exhibiting decided marks of vigour of genius, were composed in the last stage of his malady—within five weeks of his decease—when his heart was lacerated by sorrow, his imagination scared by dreams, and the heavens over his head were as brass. The public papers had announced a phenomenon, which the voyages of Captains Ross and Parry have now made more familiar, viz. the disruption of immense masses of ice in the North Pole, and their appearance in the German Ocean. Cowper seized this incident as a fit subject for his poetic powers, and produced the poem from which we make the following extract.

What portents, from what distant region, ride,
Unseen till now in ours, th' astonish'd tide?—
What view we now? more wondrous still! Behold!
Like burnish'd brass they shine, or beaten gold;
And all around the pearl's pure splendour show,
And all around the ruby's fiery glow.
Come they from India, where the burning earth,
All bounteous, gives her richest treasures birth;
And where the costly gems, that beam around
The brows of mightiest potentates, are found?
No. Never such a countless dazzling store
Had left, unseen, the Ganges' peopled shore—
Whence sprang they then?
————Far hence, where most severe
Bleak Winter well-nigh saddens all the year,
Their infant growth began. He bade arise
Their uncouth forms, portentous in our eyes.
Oft, as dissolv'd by transient suns, the snow
Left the tall cliff to join the flood below,
He caught, and curdled with a freezing blast
The current, ere it reach'd the boundless waste.

By slow degrees uprose the wondrous pile,
And long successive ages roll'd the while,
Till, ceaseless in its growth, it claim'd to stand
Tall as its rival mountains on the land.
Thus stood, and, unremovable by skill
Or force of man, had stood the structure still;
But that, though firmly fixt, supplanted yet
By pressure of its own enormous weight,
It left the shelving beach—and, with a sound
That shook the bellowing waves and rocks around,
Self-launch'd, and swiftly, to the briny wave,
As if instinct with strong desire to lave,
Down went the pond'rous mass.—

See Vol. viii. p. 415.

2ndly. His malady, however oppressive to himself, was not perceptible to others.

The Editor is enabled to state this remarkable fact on the authority of Dr. Johnson, confirmed by the testimony of Lady Throckmorton, and John Higgins, Esq. of Turvey Abbey, formerly of Weston.

There was nothing in his general manner, or intercourse with society, to excite the suspicion of the wretchedness that dwelt within. Among strangers he was at all times reserved and silent, but in the circle of familiar friends, where restraint was banished, not only did he exhibit no marks of gloom, but he could participate in the mirth of others, or inspire it from his own fertile resources of wit and humour. The prismatic colours, so to speak, were discernible through the descending shower. The bow in the heavens was not only emblematic of his imagination, but might be interpreted as the pledge of promised mercy. For it seemed to be graciously ordered that his lively and sportive imagination

should be a relief to the gloomy forebodings of his mind; and that, in vouchsafing to him this alleviation, God proclaimed, "Behold, I do set my bow in the cloud, it shall be for a covenant between me and thee."

3rdly. The rare union, in the same mind, of a rich vein of humour with a spirit of profound melancholy was never perhaps so strikingly exemplified as in the celebrated production of John Gilpin. The town resounded with its praises. Henderson recited it to overflowing auditories; Mr. Henry Thornton addressed it to a large party of friends at Mr. Newton's. Laughter might be said to hold both his sides, and the gravest were compelled to acknowledge the power of comic wit. We scarcely know a more extraordinary phenomenon than what is furnished by the history of this performance. For it appears, by the author's own testimony, that it was written "in the saddest mood, and but for that saddest mood, perhaps, had never been written at all." * It is also known that this depression was not incidental or temporary, but a fixed and settled feeling; that he was in fact absorbed, for the most part, in the profoundest melancholy; that he considered himself to be cut off from the mercy of his God, though his life was blameless and without reproach; and that, finally, having enlightened his country with strains of the sublimest morality, he died the victim of an incurable despair. As a contrast to the inimitable humour of John Gilpin, let us now turn to that most affecting representation

* Vol. ii. p. 96.

which the poet draws of his own mental sufferings, occasioned by the painful depression which has been the subject of so many remarks.

Look where he comes—in this embowered alcove
Stand close concealed, and see a statue move:
Lips busy, and eyes fixt, foot falling slow,
Arms hanging idly down, hands clasped below,
Interpret to the marking eye distress,
Such as its symptoms can alone express.
That tongue is silent now; that silent tongue
Could argue once, could jest or join the song,
Could give advice, could censure or commend,
Or charm the sorrows of a drooping friend.
Renounced alike its office and its sport,
Its brisker and its graver strains fall short;
Both fail beneath *a fever's secret sway*,
And like a summer-brook are past away.
This is a sight for pity to peruse,
Till she resemble faintly what she views;
Till sympathy contract a kindred pain,
Pierced with the woes that she laments in vain.
This, of all maladies that man infest,
Claims most compassion, and receives the least.

See Poem on Retirement.

The minute and mournful delineation of mental trouble here submitted to the eye of the reader, and the fact of this living image of woe being a portrait of Cowper drawn by his own hand, impart to it a character of inimitable pathos, and of singular and indescribable interest.

The physical and moral solution of this evil, and its painful influence on the mind, till the cure is administered by an almighty Physician, are beautifully and affectingly described.

Man is a harp whose chords elude the sight,
Each yielding harmony, disposed aright;
The screws reversed, (a task which if he please
God in a moment executes with ease,)
Ten thousand thousand strings at once go loose,
Lost, till he tune them, all their power and use.
Then neither healthy wilds, nor scenes as fair
As ever recompensed the peasant's care,
Nor soft declivities, with tufted hills,
Nor view of waters turning busy mills,
Parks in which art preceptress nature weds,
Nor gardens interspersed with flowery beds,
Nor gales, that catch the scent of blooming groves,
And waft it to the mourner as he roves—
Can call up life into his faded eye,
That passes all he sees unheeded by:
No wounds like those a wounded spirit feels,
No cure for such, till God, who makes them, heals.

Retirement.

The lines which follow are important, as proving by his own testimony that, so far from his religious views being the occasion of his wretchedness, it was to this source alone that he looked for consolation and support.

And thou, sad sufferer under nameless ill,
That yields not to the touch of human skill;
Improve the kind occasion, understand
A Father's frown, and kiss his chastening hand:
To thee the day-spring and the blaze of noon,
The purple evening and resplendent moon,
The stars, that, sprinkled o'er the vault of night,
Seem drops descending in a shower of light,
Shine not, or undesired and hated shine,
Seen through the medium of a cloud like thine:
Yet seek him, in his favour life is found,
All bliss beside, a shadow or a sound:

Then heaven, eclipsed so long, and this dull earth,
Shall seem to start into a second birth!
Nature, assuming a more lovely face,
Borrowing a beauty from the works of grace,
Shall be despised and overlooked no more,
Shall fill thee with delights unfelt before,
Impart to things inanimate a voice,
And bid her mountains and her hills rejoice;
The sound shall run along the winding vales,
And thou enjoy an Eden ere it fails.

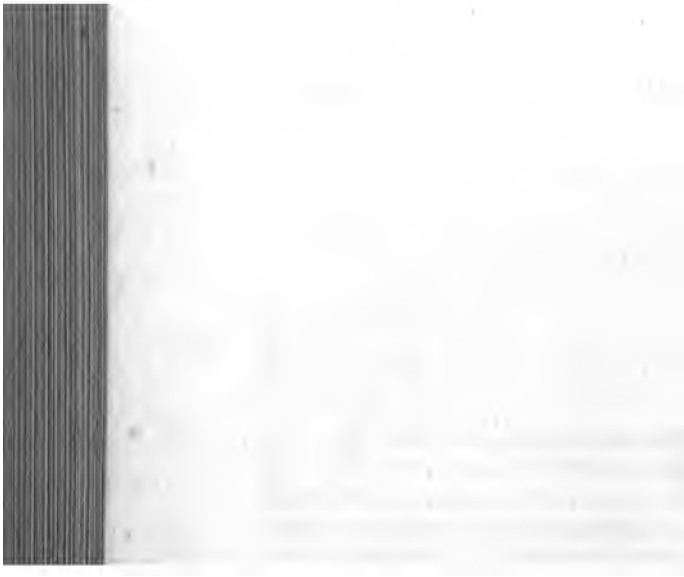
Retirement.

The Editor has entered thus largely into the consideration of Cowper's depressive malady, because it has been least understood, and subject to the most erroneous misrepresentations, affecting the character of Cowper and the honour of religion. One leading object of the writer's, in engaging in the present undertaking, has been to vindicate both from so injurious an imputation.

We have now to lay before the reader another most interesting document, of which Cowper is the acknowledged author. It contains the affecting account of the last illness and peaceful end of his brother, the Rev. John Cowper, Fellow of Bennet College, Cambridge. The original manuscript was faithfully transcribed by Newton, and then published with a Preface, which we have thought proper to retain. It cannot fail to be read with deep interest and edification; and, while it is a monument of Cowper's pious zeal and fraternal love, it is a striking record of the power of divine grace in producing that great change of heart,

which we deem to be essential to every professing Christian. This document is now extremely scarce, and not accessible but through private sources.*

* We are indebted for this copy to a much esteemed and highly valued friend, the Rev. Charles Bridges.



ADELPHI.

A

SKETCH OF THE CHARACTER

AND AN

ACCOUNT OF THE LAST ILLNESS

OF THE LATE

REV. JOHN COWPER, A.M.

FELLOW OF BENNET COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE,

WHO FINISHED HIS COURSE WITH JOY, 20TH MARCH, 1770.

WRITTEN BY HIS BROTHER,

THE LATE WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ.

OF THE INNER TEMPLE,

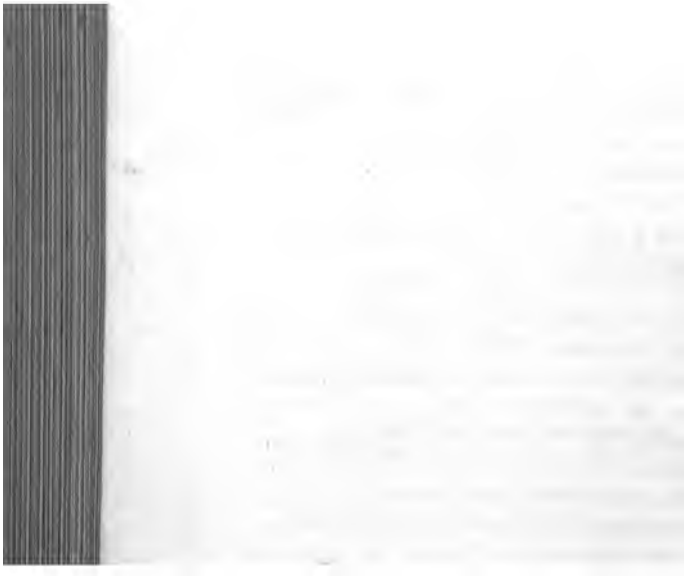
AUTHOR OF "THE TASK," &c.

FAITHFULLY TRANSCRIBED FROM HIS ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT,

BY JOHN NEWTON,

RECTOR OF ST. MARY WOOLNOTH, AND ST. MARY WOOLCHURCH.

Tu supplicanti protinus admoves
Aurem, benignus: pro lachrimis mihi
Risum reducis, pro dolore
Lætitiamque, alacremque plausum.
BUCHANAN, Ps. XXX.



NEWTON'S ORIGINAL PREFACE.

THE Editor's motives, which induce him to publish the following narrative, are chiefly two.

First, That so striking a display of the power and mercy of God may be more generally known, to the praise and glory of his grace, and the instruction and comfort of his people.

Secondly, The boasted spirit of refinement, the stress laid upon unassisted human reason, and the consequent scepticism to which they lead, and which so strongly mark the character of the present times, are not now confined merely to the dupes of infidelity; but many persons are under their influence, who would be much offended if we charged them with having renounced Christianity. While no theory is admitted in natural history, which is not confirmed by actual and positive experiment, religion is the only thing to which a trial by this test is refused. The very name of vital experimental religion excites contempt and scorn, and provokes resentment. The doctrines of regeneration by the powerful operation of the Holy Spirit, and the necessity of his continual agency and influence to advance the holiness and comforts of those, in whose hearts he has already

begun a work of grace, are not only exploded and contradicted by many who profess a regard for the Bible, and by some who have subscribed to the articles and liturgy of our established church, but they who avow an attachment to them, are, upon that account, and that account only, considered as hypocrites or visionaries, knaves or fools.

The Editor fears that many unstable persons are misled and perverted by the fine words and fair speeches of those who lie in wait to deceive. But he likewise hopes that, by the blessing of God, a candid perusal of what is here published, respecting the character, sentiments, and happy death of the late Reverend John Cowper, may convince them, some of them at least, of their mistake, and break the snare in which they have been entangled.

JOHN NEWTON.

A SKETCH OF THE LIFE

OF THE LATE

REV. JOHN COWPER, A.M.

As soon as it had pleased God, after a long and sharp season of conviction, to visit me with the consolations of his grace, it became one of my chief concerns, that my relations might be made partakers of the same mercy. In the first letter I wrote to my brother,* I took occasion to declare what God had done for my soul, and am not conscious that from that period down to his last illness I wilfully neglected an opportunity of engaging him, if it were possible, in conversation of a spiritual kind. When I left St. Alban's, and went to visit him at Cambridge, my heart being full of the subject, I poured it out before him without reserve; and, in all my subsequent dealings with him, so far as I was enabled, took care to show that I had received, not merely a set of notions, but a real impression of the truths of the gospel.

At first I found him ready enough to talk with me upon these subjects; sometimes he would dis-

* . . . . . I had a brother once, &c. The Task, book ii.

pute, but always without heat or animosity; and sometimes would endeavour to reconcile the difference of our sentiments, by supposing that, at the bottom, we were both of a mind and meant the same thing.

He was a man of a most candid and ingenuous spirit; his temper remarkably sweet, and in his behaviour to me he had always manifested an uncommon affection. His outward conduct, so far as it fell under my notice, or I could learn it by the report of others, was perfectly decent and unblameable. There was nothing vicious in any part of his practice; but, being of a studious thoughtful turn, he placed his chief delight in the acquisition of learning, and made such acquisitions in it that he had but few rivals in that of a classical kind. He was critically skilled in the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew languages, was beginning to make himself master of the Syriac, and perfectly understood the French and Italian, the latter of which he could speak fluently. These attainments, however, and many others in the literary way, he lived heartily to despise, not as useless when sanctified and employed in the service of God, but when sought after for their own sake, and with a view to the praise of men. Learned however as he was, he was easy and cheerful in his conversation, and entirely free from the stiffness which is generally contracted by men devoted to such pursuits.

Thus we spent about two years, conversing as occasion offered, and we generally visited each other once or twice a week, as long as I continued at

Huntingdon, upon the leading truths of the gospel. By this time, however, he began to be more reserved; he would hear me patiently but never reply; and this I found, upon his own confession afterward, was the effect of a resolution he had taken, in order to avoid disputes, and to secure the continuance of that peace which had always subsisted between us. When our family removed to Olney, our intercourse became less frequent. We exchanged an annual visit, and, whenever he came amongst us, he observed the same conduct, conforming to all our customs, attending family worship with us, and heard the preaching, received civilly whatever passed in conversation upon the subject, but adhered strictly to the rule he had prescribed to himself, never remarking upon or objecting to any thing he heard or saw. This, through the goodness of his natural temper, he was enabled to carry so far that, though some things unavoidably happened which we feared would give him offence, he never took any; for it was not possible to offer him the pulpit, nor when Mr. Newton was with us once at the time of family prayer, could we ask my brother to officiate, though, being himself a minister, and one of our own family for the time, the office seemed naturally to fall into his hands.

In September 1769, I learned by letters from Cambridge that he was dangerously ill. I set out for that place the day after I received them, and found him as ill as I expected. He had taken cold on his return from a journey into Wales; and, lest he should be laid up at a distance from home, had

pushed forward as far as he could from Bath with a fever upon him. Soon after his arrival at Cambridge he discharged, unknown to himself, such a prodigious quantity of blood, that the physician ascribed it only to the strength of his constitution that he was still alive; and assured me, that if the discharge should be repeated, he must inevitably die upon the spot. In this state of imminent danger, he seemed to have no more concern about his spiritual interests than when in perfect health. His couch was strewed with volumes of plays, to which he had frequent recourse for amusement. I learned indeed afterwards, that, even at this time, the thoughts of God and eternity would often force themselves upon his mind; but, not apprehending his life to be in danger, and trusting in the morality of his past conduct, he found it no difficult matter to thrust them out again.

As it pleased God that he had no relapse, he presently began to recover strength, and in ten days time I left him so far restored, that he could ride many miles without fatigue, and had every symptom of returning health. It is probable, however, that though his recovery seemed perfect, this illness was the means which God had appointed to bring down his strength in the midst of his journey, and to hasten on the malady which proved his last.

On the 16th of February 1770, I was again summoned to attend him, by letters which represented him as so ill that the physician entertained but little hopes of his recovery. I found him afflicted with asthma and dropsy, supposed to be the effect of an imposthume in his liver. He was, how-

ever, cheerful when I first arrived, expressed great joy at seeing me, thought himself much better than he had been, and seemed to flatter himself with hopes that he should be well again. My situation at this time was truly distressful. I learned from the physician, that, in this instance as in the last, he was in much greater danger than he suspected. He did not seem to lay his illness at all to heart, nor could I find by his conversation that he had one serious thought. As often as a suitable occasion offered, when we were free from company and interruption, I endeavoured to give a spiritual turn to the discourse; and, the day after my arrival, asked his permission to pray with him, to which he readily consented. I renewed my attempts in this way as often as I could, though without any apparent success: still he seemed as careless and unconcerned as ever; yet I could not but consider his willingness in this instance as a token for good, and observed with pleasure, that though at other times he discovered no mark of seriousness, yet when I spoke to him of the Lord's dealings with myself, he received what I said with affection, would press my hand, and look kindly at me, and seemed to love me the better for it.

On the 21st of the same month he had a violent fit of the asthma, which seized him when he rose, about an hour before noon, and lasted all the day. His agony was dreadful. Having never seen any person afflicted in the same way, I could not help fearing that he would be suffocated; nor was the physician himself without fears of the same kind.

This day the Lord was very present with me, and enabled me, as I sat by the poor sufferer's side to wrestle for a blessing upon him. I observed to him, that though it had pleased God to visit him with great afflictions, yet mercy was mingled with the dispensation. I said, "You have many friends, who love you, and are willing to do all they can to serve you; and so perhaps have others in the like circumstances; but it is not the lot of every sick man, how much soever he may be beloved, to have a friend that can pray for him." He replied, "That is true, and I hope God will have mercy upon me." His love for me from this time became very remarkable; there was a tenderness in it more than was merely natural; and he generally expressed it by calling for blessings upon me in the most affectionate terms, and with a look and manner not to be described. At night, when he was quite worn out with the fatigue of labouring for breath, and could get no rest, his asthma still continuing, he turned to me and said, with a melancholy air, "Brother, I seem to be marked out for misery; you know some people are so." That moment I felt my heart enlarged, and such a persuasion of the love of God towards him was wrought in my soul, that I replied with confidence, and, as if I had authority given me to say it, "But that is not your case; you are marked out for mercy." Through the whole of this most painful dispensation, he was blest with a degree of patience and resignation to the will of God, not always seen in the behaviour of established christians under sufferings so great as his. I never heard

a murmuring word escape him; on the contrary, he would often say, when his pains were most acute, "I only wish it may please God to enable me to suffer without complaining; I have no right to complain." Once he said, with a loud voice, "Let thy rod and thy staff support and comfort me:" and "Oh that it were with me as in times past, when the candle of the Lord shone upon my tabernacle!" One evening, when I had been expressing my hope that the Lord would show him mercy, he replied, "I hope he will; I am sure I pretend to nothing." Many times he spoke of himself in terms of the greatest self-abasement, which I cannot now particularly remember. I thought I could discern, in these expressions, the glimpses of approaching day, and have no doubt at present but that the Spirit of God was gradually preparing him, in a way of true humiliation, for that bright display of gospel-grace which he was soon after pleased to afford him.*

On Saturday the 10th of March, about three in the afternoon, he suddenly burst into tears, and said with a loud cry, "Oh, forsake me not!" I went to his bed-side, when he grasped my hand, and presently, by his eyes and countenance, I found that he was in prayer. Then turning to me he said, "Oh brother, I am full of what I could say to you." The nurse asked him if he would have any hartshorn or lavender. He replied, "None of these things will serve my purpose." I said, "But I know what

* There is a beautiful illustration of this sudden and happy change, in Cowper's poem entitled "Hope," vol. i.

"As when a felon whom his country's laws," &c.

would, my dear, don't I?" He answered, "You do, brother."

Having continued some time silent, he said, "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth," —then, after a pause, "Ay, and he is able to do it too."

I left him for about an hour, fearing lest he should fatigue himself with talking, and because my surprise and joy were so great that I could hardly bear them. When I returned, he threw his arms about my neck, and, leaning his head against mine, he said, "Brother, if I live, you and I shall be more like one another than we have been. But whether I live or live not, all is well, and will be so; I know it will; I have felt that which I never felt before; and am sure that God has visited me with this sickness to teach me what I was too proud to learn in health. I never had satisfaction till now. The doctrines I had been used to referred me to myself for the foundation of my hopes, and there I could find nothing to rest upon. The sheet-anchor of the soul was wanting. I thought you wrong, yet wished to believe as you did. I found myself unable to believe, yet always thought that I should one day be brought to do so. You suffered more than I have done, before you believed these truths; but our sufferings, though different in their kind and measure, were directed to the same end. I hope he has taught me that, which he teaches none but his own. I hope so. These things were foolishness to me once, but now I have a firm foundation, and am satisfied."

In the evening, when I went to bid him good night, he looked stedfastly in my face, and, with great solemnity in his air and manner, taking me by the hand, resumed the discourse in these very words: "As empty, and yet full; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things—I see the rock upon which I once split, and I see the rock of my salvation. I have peace in myself, and if I live I hope it will be that I may be made a messenger of peace to others. I have learned *that* in a moment, which I could not have learned by reading many books for many years. I have often studied these points, and studied them with great attention, but was blinded by prejudice; and, unless he, who alone is worthy to unloose the seals, had opened the book to me, I had been blinded still. Now they appear so plain, that though I am convinced no comment could ever have made me understand them, I wonder I did not see them before. Yet, great as my doubts and difficulties were, they have only served to pave the way, and being solved they make it plainer. The light I have received comes late, but it is a comfort to me that I never made the gospel-truths a subject of ridicule. Though I dissented from the persuasion and the ways of God's people, I ever thought them respectable, and therefore not proper to be made a jest of. The evil I suffer is the consequence of my descent from the corrupt original stock, and of my own personal transgressions; the good I enjoy comes to me as the overflowing of his bounty; but the crown of all his mercies is this, that he has given me a Saviour, and

not only the Saviour of mankind, brother, but *my* Saviour.

"I should delight to see the people at Olney, but am not worthy to appear amongst them." He wept at speaking these words, and repeated them with emphasis. "I should rejoice in an hour's conversation with Mr. Newton, and, if I live, shall have much discourse with him upon these subjects, but am so weak in body, that at present I could not bear it." At the same time he gave me to understand, that he had been five years inquiring after the truth, that is, from the time of my first visit to him after I left St. Albans, and that, from the very day of his ordination, which was ten years ago, he had been dissatisfied with his own views of the gospel, and sensible of their defect and obscurity; that he had always had a sense of the importance of the ministerial charge, and had used to consider himself accountable for his doctrine no less than his practice; that he could appeal to the Lord for his sincerity in all that time, and had never wilfully erred, but always been desirous of coming to the knowledge of the truth. He added, that the moment when he sent forth that cry * was the moment when light was darted into his soul; that he had thought much about these things in the course of his illness, but never till that instant was able to understand them.

It was remarkable that, from the very instant when he was first enlightened, he was also wonderfully strengthened in body, so that from the tenth

* On the 10th of March, *vide supra*.

to the fourteenth of March we all entertained hopes of his recovery. He was himself very sanguine in his expectations of it, but frequently said that his desire of recovery extended no farther than his hope of usefulness; adding, "Unless I may live to be an instrument of good to others, it were better for me to die now."

As his assurance was clear and unshaken, so he was very sensible of the goodness of the Lord to him in that respect. On the day when his eyes were opened, he turned to me, and, in a low voice, said, "What a mercy it is to a man in my condition to *know* his acceptance! I am completely satisfied of mine." On another occasion, speaking to the same purpose, he said, "This bed would be a bed of misery, and it is so—but it is likewise a bed of joy and a bed of discipline. Was I to die this night, I know I should be happy. This assurance I hope is quite consistent with the word of God. It is built upon a sense of my own utter insufficiency, and the all-sufficiency of Christ." At the same time he said, "Brother, I have been building my glory upon a sandy foundation; I have laboured night and day to perfect myself in things of no profit; I have sacrificed my health to these pursuits, and am now suffering the consequence of my misspent labour. But how contemptible do the writers I once highly valued now appear to me! 'Yea, doubtless, I count all things loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.' I must now go to a new school. I have many things to learn. I succeeded in my former

pursuits. I wanted to be highly applauded, and I was so. I was flattered up to the height of my wishes: now, I must learn a new lesson."

On the evening of the thirteenth, he said, "What comfort have I in this bed, miserable as I seem to be! Brother, I love to look at you. I see now who was right, and who was mistaken. But it seems wonderful that such a dispensation should be necessary to enforce what seems so very plain. I wish myself at Olney; you have a good river there, better than all the rivers of Damascus. What a scene is passing before me! Ideas upon these subjects crowd upon me faster than I can give them utterance. How plain do many texts appear, to which, after consulting all the commentators, I could hardly affix a meaning; and now I have their true meaning without any comment at all. There is but one key to the New Testament; there is but one interpreter. I cannot describe to you, nor shall ever be able to describe, what I felt in the moment when it was given to me. May I make a good use of it! How I shudder when I think of the danger I have just escaped! I had made up my mind upon these subjects, and was determined to hazard all upon the justness of my own opinions."

Speaking of his illness, he said, he had been followed night and day from the very beginning of it with this text: *I shall not die, but live and declare the works of the Lord.* This notice was fulfilled to him, though not in such a sense as my desires of his recovery prompted me to put upon it. His remarkable amendment soon appeared to be no more

than a present supply of strength and spirits, that he might be able to speak of the better life which God had given him, which was no sooner done than he relapsed as suddenly as he had revived. About this time he formed a purpose of receiving the sacrament, induced to it principally by a desire of setting his seal to the truth, in presence of those who were strangers to the change which had taken place in his sentiments. It must have been administered to him by the Master of the College, to whom he designed to have made this short declaration, "If I die, I die in the belief of the doctrines of the Reformation, and of the Church of England, as it was at the time of the Reformation." But, his strength declining apace, and his pains becoming more severe, he could never find a proper opportunity of doing it. His experience was rather peace than joy, if a distinction may be made between joy and that heartfelt peace which he often spoke of in the most comfortable terms; and which he expressed by a heavenly smile upon his countenance under the bitterest bodily distress. His words upon this subject once were these—"How wonderful is it that God should look upon man, especially that he should look upon *me!* Yet he sees me, and takes notice of all that I suffer. I see him too; he is present before me, and I hear him say, *Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*" Matt. xi. 28.

On the fourteenth, in the afternoon, I perceived that the strength and spirits which had been afforded him were suddenly withdrawn, so that by

the next day his mind became weak, and his speech roving and faltering. But still, at intervals, he was enabled to speak of divine things with great force and clearness. On the evening of the fifteenth, he said, "'There is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance.' That text has been sadly misunderstood by me as well as by others. Where is that just person to be found? Alas! what must have become of me, if I had died this day se'nnight? What should I have had to plead? My own righteousness! *That* would have been of great service to me, to be sure. Well, whither next? Why, to the mountains to fall upon us, and to the hills to cover us. I am not duly thankful for the mercy I have received. Perhaps I may ascribe some part of my insensibility to my great weakness of body. I hope at least that if I was better in health, it would be better with me in these respects also."

The next day, perceiving that his understanding began to suffer by the extreme weakness of his body, he said, "I have been vain of my understanding and of my acquirements in this place; and now God has made me little better than an idiot, as much as to say, now be proud if you can. Well, while I have any senses left, my thoughts will be poured out in the praise of God. I have an interest in Christ, in his blood and sufferings, and my sins are forgiven me. Have I not cause to praise him? When my understanding fails me quite, as I think it will soon, then he will pity my weakness."

Though the Lord intended that his warfare should be short, yet a warfare he was to have, and to be exposed to a measure of conflict with his own corruptions. His pain being extreme, his powers of recollection much impaired, and the Comforter withholding for a season his sensible support, he was betrayed into a fretfulness and impatience of spirit which had never been permitted to show itself before. This appearance alarmed me, and, having an opportunity afforded me by every body's absence, I said to him, "You were happier last Saturday than you are to-day. Are you entirely destitute of the consolations you then spoke of? And do you not sometimes feel comfort flowing into your heart from a sense of your acceptance with God?" He replied, "Sometimes I do, but sometimes I am left to desperation." The same day, in the evening, he said, "Brother, I believe you are often uneasy, lest what lately passed should come to nothing." I replied by asking him, whether, when he found his patience and his temper fail, he endeavoured to pray for power against his corruptions? He answered, "Yes, a thousand times in a day. But I see myself odiously vile and wicked. If I die in this illness, I beg you will place no other inscription over me than such as may just mention my name and the parish where I was minister; for that I ever had a being, and what sort of a being I had, cannot be too soon forgot. I was just beginning to be a deist, and had long desired to be so; and I will own to you what I never confessed before, that my function and the duties

of it were a weariness to me which I could not bear. Yet, wretched creature and beast as I was, I was esteemed religious, though I lived without God in the world." About this time, I reminded him of the account of Janeway, which he once read at my desire. He said he had laughed at it in his own mind, and accounted it mere madness and folly. "Yet base as I am," said he, "I have no doubt now but God has accepted me also, and forgiven me all my sins."

I then asked him what he thought of my narrative?* He replied, "I thought it strange, and ascribed much of it to the state in which you had been. When I came to visit you in London, and found you in that deep distress, I would have given the universe to have administered some comfort to you. You may remember that I tried every method of doing it. When I found that all my attempts were vain, I was shocked to the greatest degree. I began to consider your sufferings as a judgment upon you, and my inability to alleviate them as a judgment upon myself. When Mr. M.† came, he succeeded in a moment. This surprised me; but it does not surprise me now. He had the key to your heart, which I had not. That which filled me with disgust against my office as a minister was the same ill success which attended me in my own parish. There I endeavoured to soothe the afflicted, and to reform the unruly by warning and reproof; but all that I could say in either case

* Cowper's Memoir of Himself.

† The Rev. Martin Madan.

was spoken to the wind, and attended with no effect."

There is that in the nature of salvation by grace, when it is truly and experimentally known, which prompts every person to think himself the most extraordinary instance of its power. Accordingly, my brother insisted upon the precedence in this respect; and, upon comparing his case with mine, would by no means allow my deliverance to have been so wonderful as his own. He observed that, from the beginning, both his manner of life and his connexions had been such as had a natural tendency to blind his eyes, and to confirm and rivet his prejudices against the truth. Blameless in his outward conduct, and having no open immorality to charge himself with, his acquaintance had been with men of the same stamp, who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised the doctrines of the cross. Such were all who, from his earliest days he had been used to propose to himself as patterns for his imitation. Not to go farther back, such was the clergyman under whom he received the first rudiments of his education; such was the schoolmaster, under whom he was prepared for the University; and such were all the most admired characters there, with whom he was most ambitious of being connected. He lamented the dark and Christless condition of the place, where learning and morality were all in all, and where, if a man was possessed of these qualifications, he neither doubted himself, nor did any body else question, the safety of his state. He concluded,

therefore, that to show the fallacy of such appearances, and to root out the prejudices which long familiarity with them had fastened upon his mind, required a more than ordinary exertion of divine power, and that the grace of God was more clearly manifested in such a work than in the conversion of one like me, who had no outside righteousness to boast of, and who, if I was ignorant of the truth, was not however so desperately prejudiced against it.

His thoughts, I suppose, had been led to this subject, when, one afternoon, while I was writing by the fire-side, he thus addressed himself to the nurse, who sat at his bolster. "Nurse, I have lived three-and-thirty years, and I will tell you how I have spent them. When I was a boy, they taught me Latin; and because I was the son of a gentleman, they taught me Greek. These I learned under a sort of private tutor; at the age of fourteen, or thereabouts, they sent me to a public school, where I learned more Latin and Greek, and, last of all, to this place, where I have been learning more Latin and Greek still. Now has not this been a blessed life, and much to the glory of God?" Then directing his speech to me, he said, "Brother, I was going to say I was born in such a year; but I correct myself: I would rather say, in such a year I came into the world. You know when I was born."

As long as he expected to recover, the souls committed to his care were much upon his mind. One day, when none was present but myself, he

prayed thus: "O Lord, thou art good; goodness is thy very essence, and thou art the fountain of wisdom. I am a poor worm, weak and foolish as a child. Thou hast intrusted many souls unto me; and I have not been able to teach them, because I knew thee not myself. Grant me ability, O Lord, for I can do nothing without thee, and give me grace to be faithful."

In a time of severe and continual pain, he smiled in my face, and said, "Brother, I am as happy as a king." And, the day before he died, when I asked him what sort of a night he had had, he replied, "A sad night, not a wink of sleep." I said, "Perhaps, though, your mind has been composed, and you have been enabled to pray?" "Yes," said he, "I have endeavoured to spend the hours in the thoughts of God and prayer; I have been much comforted, and all the comfort I got came to me in this way."

The next morning I was called up to be witness of his last moments. I found him in a deep sleep, lying perfectly still, and seemingly free from pain. I staid with him till they pressed me to quit the room, and in about five minutes after I had left him he died; sooner indeed than I expected, though for some days there had been no hopes of his recovery. His death at that time was rather extraordinary; at least, I thought it so; for, when I took leave of him the night before, he did not seem worse or weaker than he had been, and, for aught that appeared, might have lasted many days; but the Lord, in whose sight the death of his saints is pre-

cious, cut short his sufferings, and gave him a speedy and peaceful departure.

He died at seven in the morning, on the 20th of March, 1770.

Thou art the source and centre of all minds,
Their only point of rest, eternal Word!
From Thee departing, they are lost, and rove
At random, without honour, hope, or peace.
From Thee is all that soothes the life of man,
His high endeavour and his glad success,
His strength to suffer, and his will to serve.
But, oh! thou bounteous Giver of all good,
Thou art of all thy gifts Thyself the crown.
Give what thou canst, without Thee we are poor,
And with thee rich, take what Thou wilt away.

The Task, book v.

The fraternal love and piety of Cowper are beautifully illustrated in this most interesting document. No sooner had he experienced the value of religion, and its inward peace and hope, in his own heart, than he feels solicitous to communicate the blessing to others. True piety is always diffusive. It does not, like the sordid miser, hoard up the treasure for self-enjoyment, but is enriched by giving, and impoverished only by withholding.

Friends, parents, kindred, first it will embrace,
Our country next, and next all human race.

The prejudices of his brother, and yet his mild and amiable spirit of forbearance; the zeal of Cowper, and its final happy result, impart to this narrative a

singular degree of interest. Others would have been deterred by apparent difficulties; but true zeal is full of faith, as well as of love, and does not contemplate man's resistance but God's mighty power.

The example of John Cowper furnishes also a remarkable evidence that a man may be distinguished by the highest endowments of human learning, and yet be ignorant of that knowledge which is emphatically called life eternal.

The distinction between the knowledge that is derived from books and the wisdom that cometh from above, is drawn by Cowper with a happy and just discrimination.

> Knowledge and wisdom, far from being one,
> Have ofttimes no connexion—knowledge dwells
> In heads replete with thoughts of other men;
> Wisdom in minds attentive to their own.
> Knowledge, a rude, unprofitable mass,
> The mere materials with which wisdom builds,
> 'Till smooth'd, and squar'd, and fitted to its place,
> Does but encumber whom it seems t' enrich.
> Knowledge is proud that he has learn'd so much;
> Wisdom is humble that he knows no more.
>
> *The Task*, book vi.

It is important to know how far the powers of human reason extend in matters of religion, and where they fail. Reason can examine the claims of a divine revelation, and determine its authority by the most conclusive arguments. It can expose error, and establish the truth; attack infidelity within its own entrenchments, and carry its victorious arms into the very camp of the enemy.

It can defend all the outworks of religion, and vindicate its insulted majesty. But at this point its powers begin to fail. It cannot confer a *spiritual* apprehension of the truth in the understanding, nor a *spiritual* reception of it in the heart. This is the province of grace. "No man knoweth the things of God, but the Spirit of God, *and he to whom the Spirit hath revealed them.*" "Not by might, nor by power, *but by my Spirit*, saith the Lord." Men of learning endeavour to attain to the knowledge of divine things, in the same manner as they acquire an insight into human things, that is, by human power and human teaching. Whereas divine things require a divine power and divine teaching. "All thy children shall be taught of God." Not that human reason is superseded in its use. Man is always a rational and moral agent. But it is reason, conscious of its own weakness, simple in its views, and humble in its spirit, enlightened, guided, and regulated in all its researches by the grace and wisdom that is from above. John Cowper expresses the substance of this idea in the following emphatic words:—"I have learned *that* in a moment, which I could not have learned by reading many books for many years. I have often studied these points, and studied them with great attention, but was blinded by prejudice; and unless he, who alone is worthy to unloose the seals, had opened the book to me, I had been blinded still."

The information supplied respecting John Cowper by preceding biographers is brief and scanty. The following are the particulars which the Editor has

succeeded in obtaining. John Cowper was considered to be one of the best scholars in the university of Cambridge. In 1759 he obtained the Chancellor's gold medal, and in 1762 gained both the prizes for Masters of Arts. He was subsequently elected Fellow of Bennet, and became private tutor to Lord Walsingham. He translated the four first books of the Henriade; his brother William, it is said, the four next, (Hayley states two cantos only, and alleges Cowper's own authority for the fact.) E. B. Greene, Esq., a relative of Dr. Greene, the master of the college,* the ninth, and Robert Lloyd the tenth book. It appeared in Smollet's edition, in 1762, but the writer has not been able to procure a copy. He afterwards engaged in an edition of Apollonius Rhodius,† when his sedentary and studious habits produced an imposthume in the liver, which brought him to his grave in the thirty-third year of his age. He was buried at Foxton in Cambridgeshire, of which place he was rector.

Dr. Bennet, Bishop of Cloyne, in a letter addressed to Dr. Parr, bears the following honourable testimony to his merits.

"TO THE REV. DR. PARR.

"Emanuel College, April 18, 1770.

"We have lost the best classic and most liberal thinker in our university, Cowper of Ben'et. He

* He was afterwards Bishop of Lincoln.

† The subject of this poem is the Argonautic expedition under Jason.

sat so long at his studies, that the posture gave rise to an abscess in his liver, and he fell a victim to learning. The goddess has so few votaries here, that she resolved to take the best offering we had, and she employed Apollonius Rhodius to strike the blow. I write the author again, Apollonius Rhodius. Cowper had laboured hard at an edition of him for several years, and applied so much to his favourite author, that it cost his life. I shall make a bold push for his papers. Yet, what omens I have! Melanchthon did but think of a translation, and died. Hoeltzlinus owns he wrote the latter part of the annotations, manu lassissimâ et corpore imbecillo, and died before he put the last hand to them. Cowper collates all the editions, makes a new translation, and follows his predecessors. One would think that by some unknown fate, or by some curse of his master Callimachus, our poet was doomed to remain in obscurity. His enemies may say, that the dulness of his verses bears some resemblance to the torpedo, and benumbs or kills whatever touches it."—*See Dr. Parr's Works*, vol. vii. p. 75.

The following elegy was also composed in honour of his memory by one of his fellow collegians, which evinces the high sense entertained of his character and classical attainments.

ELEGY

ON THE DEATH OF THE REV. JOHN COWPER, OF CORPUS CHRISTI COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE, BY A FELLOW COLLEGIAN.

Where art thou, Moschus, and where are we all?
Thou from high Helicon's muse-haunted hill
Advanc'd to Sion's mount celestial:
Encumber'd we with earth and sorrow still.

Before the throne thy golden lyre is strung,
Seraphic descant fills thy raptur'd mind:
On Camus' willows pale our harps are hung;
Our footsteps linger on his banks behind.

The chosen Lawgiver from Pisgah's hill,
His wond'ring eyes around in transport threw:
On earthly Canaan having gaz'd his fill,
To heavenly Canaan's glories quick withdrew.

So, nurst in sacred and in classic lore,
With varied science at its fountain fraught,
From human knowledge to th' exhaustless store
Of heaven he stole to taste the fuller draught.

What boots the beauty of the classic page,
And what philosophy's sublimer rule,
What all th' advances of maturing age,
If dies the wise man as departs the fool?

Master of Greece's thundering eloquence,
The force of Roman grace to him was known;
The well-turn'd period, join'd with manly sense:
Sage criticism mark'd him for her own.

Ah! what avails the power of harmony,
The poet's melody, the critic's skill!
The verse may live, yet must the maker die;
Such is stern Atropos's solemn will.

Sweet bard of Rhodes,* bright star of Egypt's court,
Whom Ptolemy's discerning bounty drew
To guard fair science in the learn'd resort,
Thy muse alone can pay the tribute due.

Thy muse, that paints Medea's frantic love,
And all the transports of th' enamour'd maid,
Who dar'd each strongest obstacle remove,
Her reason and her art by love betray'd.

While hardy Jason ploughs old Ocean's plain,
First of the Greeks to tempt Barbarian seas,
With him we share the dangers of the main,
Nor dread the crash of the Symplegades.

Vain wish! thy deathless heroes should commend
Thy verse to fame, and bid it sweeter sound.
He who thy name's revival did intend,
In bloom of youth is buried under ground.†

So, nested on the rock, the parent dove
Sees down the cleft her callow offspring fall;
Full little may its chirping plaints behove;
She only hears, but cannot help its call. ‡

Like the fair swan of fame, the grateful muse
Assiduous tends on Lethe's barren bank,
To raise the name that envious time would lose,
Where many millions erst for ever sank.

While yet I wait, thou ever-honour'd shade,
Some better bard should the memorial rear,
The debt to friendship due by me be paid,
Weak in poetic fire, in friendship's zeal sincere.

* Apollonius Rhodius. He had the charge of the celebrated library at Alexandria, in the time of Ptolemy.

† John Cowper.

‡ The idea in this stanza is taken from the 4th book of Apollonius, line 1298.

We add the letter addressed by Cowper to his friend Mr. Unwin on this occasion.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

March 31, 1770.

My dear Friend—I am glad that the Lord made you a fellow-labourer with us in praying my dear brother out of darkness into light. It was a blessed work; and when it shall be your turn to die in the Lord, and to rest from all your labours, that work shall follow you. I once entertained hopes of his recovery: from the moment when it pleased God to give him light in his soul, there was, for four days, such a visible amendment in his body as surprised us all. Dr. Glynn himself was puzzled, and began to think that all his threatening conjectures would fail of their accomplishment. I am well satisfied that it was thus ordered, not for his own sake, but for the sake of us, who had been so deeply concerned for his spiritual welfare, that he might be able to give such evident proof of the work of God upon his soul as should leave no doubt behind it. As to his friends at Cambridge, they knew nothing of the matter. He never spoke of these things but to myself; nor to me, when others were within hearing, except that he sometimes would speak in the presence of the nurse. He knew well to make the distinction between those who could understand him and those who could not; and that he was not in circumstances to maintain such a controversy as a declaration of his new views and sentiments

would have exposed him to. Just after his death, I spoke of this change to a dear friend of his, a fellow of the college, who had attended him through all his sickness with assiduity and tenderness. But he did not understand me.

I now proceed to mention such particulars as I can recollect; and which I had not opportunity to insert in my letters to Olney; for I left Cambridge suddenly, and sooner than I expected. He was deeply impressed with a sense of the difficulties he should have to encounter, if it should please God to raise him again. He saw the necessity of being faithful, and the opposition he should expose himself to by being so. Under the weight of these thoughts, he one day broke out in the following prayer, when only myself was with him. "O Lord, thou art light; and in thee is no darkness at all. Thou art the fountain of all wisdom, and it is essential to thee to be good and gracious. I am a child, O Lord, teach me how I shall conduct myself! Give me the wisdom of the serpent with the harmlessness of the dove! Bless the souls thou hast committed to the care of thy helpless miserable creature, who has no wisdom or knowledge of his own, and make me faithful to them for thy mercy's sake!" Another time he said, "How wonderful it is, that God should look upon man; and how much more wonderful that he should look upon such a worm as I am! Yet he does look upon me, and takes the exactest notice of all my sufferings. He is present, and I see him, (I mean, by faith,) and he stretches out his arms

towards me,"—and he then stretched out his own—"and he says, 'Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest!'" He smiled and wept, when he spoke these words. When he expressed himself upon these subjects, there was a weight and dignity in his manner such as I never saw before. He spoke with the greatest deliberation, making a pause at the end of every sentence; and there was something in his air and in the tone of his voice inexpressibly solemn, unlike himself, unlike what I had ever seen in another.

This had God wrought. I have praised him for his marvellous act, and have felt a joy of heart upon the subject of my brother's death, such as I never felt but in my own conversion. He is now before the throne; and yet a little while and we shall meet, never more to be divided. Yours, my very dear friend, with my affectionate respects to yourself and yours, W. C.

Postscript.—A day or two before his death, he grew so weak and was so very ill, that he required continual attendance, so that he had neither strength nor opportunity to say much to me. Only the day before, he said he had had a sleepless, but a composed and quiet night. I asked him, if he had been able to collect his thoughts. He replied, "All night long I have endeavoured to think upon God and to continue in prayer. I had great peace and comfort; and what comfort I had came in that way." When I saw him the next morning at seven o'clock he was dying, fast asleep, and exempted, in all ap-

pearance, from the sense of those pangs which accompany dissolution. I shall be glad to hear from you, my dear friend, when you can find time to write, and are so inclined. The death of my beloved brother teems with many useful lessons. May God seal the instruction upon our hearts!

Besides the documents already inserted, Cowper translated the narrative of Mr. Van Lier, a minister of the Reformed Church, at the Cape of Good Hope. Mr. Van Lier was born in Holland, in the year 1764; his mother was pious, and brought him up in the principles of true religion, endeavouring from his early youth to direct his mind to the ministry. After the usual course of education, he entered at the University, where, though he did not neglect his studies, he forgot his God. His talents seem to have been considerable, his imagination ardent, but his passions not under sufficient control; and, with all the elements that might have formed a great character, by the misapplication of his time, opportunities, and faculties, he became vicious, and subsequently a sceptic. God in mercy exercised him with a series of trials, but the impression was always ultimately effaced—till at length the blow reached him, which lacerated his heart, extinguished all his hopes of earthly happiness, and thus finally brought him to God. Among the excellent books that con-

tributed to dispel his errors, he specified the "Cardiphonia" of Newton with grateful acknowledgment. It is justly considered the best of all his works, and has been made eminently useful. Mr. Van Lier subsequently wrote a narrative, in Latin, containing an account of his conversion, and of all the remarkable events of his life. This narrative he addressed to Newton, at whose request it was translated by Cowper. It was published under the title of "The Power of Grace illustrated." Interesting as are its contents, yet, as they comprise nearly two hundred pages, we find it impossible to allow space for its insertion, though it is well entitled to appear in a separate form.

He concludes his narrative in these words: "O happy and glorious hour, when I shall be delivered from all trouble and sin, from this body of death, from the wicked world, and from the snares of Satan! when I shall appear before my Saviour without spot, and shall so behold his glory, and be filled with his presence, as to be wholly and for ever engaged in adoration, admiration, gratitude, and love!"

As we are now drawing towards the conclusion of this undertaking, some reference is due to names once honoured by Cowper's friendship, and perpetuated in his works. A distinguished place is due to the Rev. William Cawthorne Unwin. His death has been recorded in a former volume, as well as his burial in the cathedral at Winchester. A Latin epitaph was composed on this occasion by Cowper, but objected to by a relative of the family, because it

adverted to his mother's early prayers that God might incline his heart to the ministry. We subjoin the epitaph which replaced the pious and classical composition of Cowper.

IN MEMORY OF THE

REV. WILLIAM CAWTHORNE UNWIN, M.A.

RECTOR OF STOCK, IN ESSEX.

He was educated at the Charter-house, in London, under the Rev. Dr. Crusius; and, having gone through the education of that school, he was at an early period admitted to Christ's College, Cambridge. He died in this city, the 29th of Nov. 1786, aged forty-one years, leaving a widow and three young children.

(The above is on a flat stone in the Catheral.)

And is this the memorial of the interesting and pious Unwin? Shall no monumental tablet record that he was "the endeared and valued friend of Cowper?" We have seldom seen so cold and *jejune* an epitaph to commemorate a man distinguished by so many virtues, and associated with such interesting recollections. We are happy in being enabled to furnish a testimony more worthy of him in the following letter, addressed by Cowper to the present Lord Carrington.

TO ROBERT SMITH, ESQ.*

Weston Underwood, near Olney, Dec. 9, 1786.

My dear Sir—We have indeed suffered a great loss by the death of our friend Unwin; and the

* Afterwards created Lord Carrington.

shock that attended it was the more severe, as till within a few hours of his decease there seemed to be no very alarming symptoms. All the account that we received from Mr. Henry Thornton, who acted like a true friend on the occasion, and with a tenderness toward all concerned that does him great honour, encouraged our hopes of his recovery; and Mrs. Unwin herself found him on her arrival at Winchester so cheerful, and in appearance so likely to live, that her letter also seemed to promise us all that we could wish on the subject. But an unexpected turn in his distemper, which suddenly seized his bowels, dashed all our hopes, and deprived us almost immediately of a man whom we must ever regret. His mind having been from his infancy deeply tinctured with religious sentiments, he was always impressed with a sense of the importance of the great change of all; and, on former occasions, when at any time he found himself indisposed, was consequently subject to distressing alarms and apprehensions. But in this last instance his mind was from the first composed and easy; his fears were taken away, and succeeded by such a resignation as warrants us in saying, "that God made all his bed in his sickness." I believe it is always thus, where the heart, though upright toward God, as Unwin's assuredly was, is yet troubled with the fear of death. When death indeed comes, he is either welcome, or at least has lost his sting.

I have known many such instances, and his mother, from the moment that she learned with what tranquillity he was favoured in his last illness, for

that very reason expected it would be his last. Yet not with so much certainty, but that the favourable accounts of him at length, in a great measure, superseded that persuasion.

She begs me to assure you, my dear Sir, how sensible she is, as well as myself, of the kindness of your inquiries. She suffers this stroke, not with more patience and submission than I expected, for I never knew her hurried by any affliction into the loss of either, but in appearance at least, and at present, with less injury to her health than I apprehended. She observed to me, after reading your kind letter, that, though it was a proof of the greatness of her loss, yet it afforded her pleasure, though a melancholy one, to see how much her son had been loved and valued by such a person as yourself.

Mrs. Unwin wrote to her daughter-in-law, to invite her and the family hither, hoping that a change of scene, and a situation so pleasant as this, may be of service to her, but we have not yet received her answer. I have good hope, however, that, great as her affliction must be, she will yet be able to support it, for she well knows whither to resort for consolation.

The virtues and amiable qualities of our friends are the things for which we most wish to keep them; but they are, on the other hand, the very things that in particular ought to reconcile us to their departure. We find ourselves sometimes connected with, and engaged in affection, too, to a person of whose readiness and fitness for another

life we cannot have the highest opinion. The death of such men has a bitterness in it, both to themselves and survivors, which, thank God! is not to be found in the death of Unwin.

I know, my dear Sir, how much you valued him, and I know also, how much he valued you. With respect to him, all is well; and of you, if I should survive you, which perhaps, is not very probable, I shall say the same.

In the mean time, believe me, with the warmest wishes for your health and happiness, and with Mrs. Unwin's affectionate respects,

Yours, my dear Sir,

Most faithfully,

W. C.

Joseph Hill, Esq., survived Cowper many years, and lived to an advanced age. He formerly resided in Great Queen Street, and afterwards in Saville Row, and was eminent in his profession. His widow survived him, and died in the year 1824. The letters addressed to him by Cowper were arranged by Dr. Johnson, and ornamented with a suitable binding. They were finally left as an heir-loom at Wargrave, near Henley. Joseph Jekyll, Esq., the barrister, once celebrated for his wit and humour, succeeded to that property, and still survives at the moment in which we are writing.

Samuel Rose, Esq., after a comparatively short career of professional eminence, was seized with a rheumatic fever, which he caught at Horsham, in attending the Sussex sessions, in 1804. He died

in the thirty-eighth year of his age, declaring to those around him, "I have lived long enough to review my grounds for confidence, and I have unspeakable comfort in assuring those I love that I am daily more reconciled in leaving the world now than at a later period."

Cowper's sentiments of him are expressed in the following letter.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

Weston Underwood, Dec. 2, 1788

My dear Friend—I told you lately, that I had an ambition to introduce to your acquaintance my valuable friend, Mr. Rose. He is now before you. You will find him a person of genteel manners and agreeable conversation. As to his other virtues and good qualities, which are many, and such as are not often found in men of his years, I consign them over to your own discernment, perfectly sure, that none of them will escape you. I give you joy of each other, and remain, my dear old friend, most truly yours,

W. C.

In recalling the name of Lady Austen, it is sufficient to entitle her to grateful remembrance, that it is to her we are indebted for the first suggestion of the poem of "The Task," that lasting monument of the fame of Cowper. It has also been recorded that she subsequently furnished the materials for the story of John Gilpin.

Her maiden name was Richardson; she was married very early in life to Sir Robert Austen, Baronet, and resided with him in France, where he died. After this event, she lived with her sister Mrs. Jones, the wife of the Rev. Mr. Jones, minister of Clifton, near Olney. It was thus that her intercourse commenced with Cowper. In a subsequent period, she was married to a native of France, M. De Tardif, a gentleman, and a poet, who has expressed, in some elegant French verses, his just and deep sense of her accomplished, endearing character. In visiting Paris with him in the course of the summer of 1802, she sunk under the fatigue of the excursion, and died in that city on the 12th of August. It is due to the memory of this lady to rescue her name from a surmise injurious to her sincerity and honour; and the Editor rejoices that he possesses the means of affording her, what he conceives to be an ample justification. In the published correspondence of the late respected Alexander Knox, Esq., a doubt is expressed how far she is not chargeable with endeavouring to supplant Mrs. Unwin in the affections of Cowper. It is already recorded that a breach occurred between the two ladies, and that the poet, with a sensitiveness and delicacy that reflect the highest credit on his feelings and judgment, relinquished the society of Lady Austen from that period. They never met again. There is no direct charge conveyed by Mr. Knox, but there is evidently expressed the language of doubt and surmise. Local impressions are often the best interpretation

of questionable occurrences. With this view the Editor has endeavoured to trace the nature of the rupture, on the spot, by a communication with surviving parties. From these sources of inquiry it appears that Lady Austen was a woman of great wit and vivacity, and possessed the power of exciting much interest by her manner and conversation – that Mrs. Unwin, who was of a more sedate and quiet character, seeing the ascendancy that Lady Austen thus acquired, became jealous, and that a rupture was the consequence. Mr. Andrews, an intelligent inhabitant of Olney, who is my informant, assured me that such was the substance of the case, and that the rest was mere surmise and conjecture. On my asking him whether he knew the impressions on Mr. Scott's mind with regard to this event, he added, "that he himself asked Mr. Scott the question, and that his reply was, 'Who can be surprised that two women should be continually in the society of one man, and quarrel sooner or later with each other?'" The blunt and honest reply of Mr. Scott we apprehend to be the best commentary on the transaction. There may be jealousies in friendship as well as in love; and the possibility of female rivalship is sufficient to account for the rupture, without the intervention of either friendship or love.

From Mrs. Livius, of Bedford, formerly Miss Barham,* and intimate with Newton, Cowper, and

* Sister of the late Joseph Foster Barham, Esq. I cannot mention this endeared character, with whom I have the privilege of being so nearly connected, without recording my affectionate regard, and high estimation of her piety and virtues.

Lady Austen, I learn that, though the vivacity and manner of Lady Austen weakened the belief of the depth of her personal religion, yet Mrs. Livius never entertained any doubt of its reality. Her own deep personal piety during a long life, and her just discrimination of character, are sufficient to give weight and authority to her judgment.

I take this opportunity of expressing her conviction that the loss of Lady Austen's society was a great privation to Cowper; that she both enlivened his spirits and stimulated his genius, and that the jealousy of Mrs. Unwin operated injuriously by compelling him to relinquish so innocent a source of gratification. Hayley, in some lines written on the occasion of her death, speaks of her as one who

> Wak'd in a poet inspiration's flame;
> Sent the freed eagle in the sun to bask,
> And from the mind of Cowper—call'd "The Task."

Of the Rev. Walter Bagot, who departed in the year 1806, aged seventy-five, the poet always spoke in the language of unfeigned esteem and affection.

Sir George Throckmorton's death has been already recorded, and with this event the genius of the place may be said to have deserted its hallowed retreats, for the mansion exists no longer. His surviving estimable widow, the Catharina of Cowper, resides at Northampton.

Lady Hesketh, whose affectionate kindness to the poet must have endeared her to every reader, died in the year 1808, aged seventy-four.

To the Editor's brother-in-law, the Rev. Dr. Johnson, several testimonies have already been

borne in the course of this work. A brief record of him is prefixed to the eighth volume. He died in the autumn of 1833, leaving the memory of his virtues to be perpetuated in the page of Cowper, and to be engraven on the hearts of his friends.

The value which Cowper attached to the esteem of the Rev. W. Bull, the friend and travelling companion of John Thornton, Esq., may be seen in the following letter. It alludes to the approbation expressed by Mr. Bull on the publication of his first volume of poems.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM BULL.

March 24, 1782.

Your letter gave me great pleasure, both as a testimony of your approbation and of your regard. I wrote in hopes of pleasing you, and such as you; and though I must confess that, at the same time, I cast a sidelong glance at the good liking of the world at large, I believe I can say it was more for the sake of their advantage and instruction than their praise. They are children; if we give them physic, we must sweeten the rim of the cup with honey—if my book is so far honoured as to be made the vehicle of true knowledge to any that are ignorant, I shall rejoice, and do already rejoice that it has procured me a proof of your esteem.

Yours, most truly, W. C.

Mr. Bull was distinguished by no common powers of mind, brilliant wit, and imagination. It was at

his suggestion that Cowper engaged in translating the poems of Madame Guion. He died, as he lived, in the hopes and consolations of the Gospel, and left a son, the Rev. Thomas Bull, who inherits his father's virtues.

Wherever men have acquired celebrity by those powers of genius with which Providence has seen fit to discriminate them, a curiosity prevails to learn all the minuter traits of person, habit, and real character. We wish to realize the portrait before our eyes, to see how far all the component parts are in harmony with each other; or whether the elevation of mind which raises them beyond the general standard is perceptible in the occurrences of common life. Tell me, said an inquirer, writing from America, what was the figure of Cowper, what the character of his countenance, the expression of his eye, his manner, his habits, the house he lived in, whether its aspect was north or south, &c. This is amusing, but it shows the power of sympathy with which we are drawn to whatever commands our admiration, and excites the emotions of esteem and love.

The person and mind of Cowper seem to have been formed with equal kindness by nature, and it may be questioned if she ever bestowed on any man, with a fonder prodigality, all the requisites to conciliate affection and to inspire respect.

He is said to have been handsome in his youth. His features strongly expressed the powers of his mind and all the sensibility of his heart; and even

in his declining years time seemed to have spared much of its ravages, though his mind was harassed by unceasing nervous excitement.

He was of a middle stature, rather strong than delicate in the form of his limbs; the colour of his hair was a light brown, that of his eyes a bluish grey, and his complexion ruddy. In his dress he was neat, but not finical; in his diet temperate, and not dainty.

He had an air of pensive reserve in his deportment, and his extreme shyness sometimes produced in his manners an indescribable mixture of awkwardness and dignity; but no person could be more truly graceful, when he was in perfect health, and perfectly pleased with his society. Towards women, in particular, his behaviour and conversation were delicate and fascinating in the highest degree.

There was a simplicity of manner and character in Cowper which always charms, and is often the attribute of real genius. He was singularly calculated to excite emotions of esteem and love by those qualities that win confidence and inspire sympathy. In friendship he was uniformly faithful; and, if the events of life had not disappointed his fondest hopes, no man would have been more eminently adapted for the endearments of domestic life.

His daily habits of study and exercise are so minutely and agreeably delineated in his letters, that they present a perfect portrait of his domestic character.

His voice conspired with his features to announce to all who saw and heard him the extreme sensibility of his heart; and in reading aloud he furnished the chief delight of those social, enchanting winter evenings, which he has described so happily in the fourth book of "The Task."

Secluded from the world, as he had long been, he yet retained in advanced life singular talents for conversation; and his remarks were uniformly distinguished by mild and benevolent pleasantry, by a strain of delicate humour, varied by solid and serious good-sense, and those united charms of a cultivated mind, which he has himself very happily described in drawing the character of a venerable friend.

> Grave without dulness, learned without pride;
> Exact, yet not precise: though meek, keen-eyed;
> Who, when occasion justified its use,
> Had wit, as bright as ready, to produce;
> Could fetch from records of an earlier age,
> Or from philosophy's enlightened page,
> His rich materials, and regale your ear
> With strains, it was a privilege to hear.
> Yet, above all, his luxury supreme,
> And his chief glory was the gospel theme:
> Ambitious not to shine or to excel,
> But to treat justly what he lov'd so well.

But the traits of his character are nowhere developed with happier effect than in his own writings, and especially in his poems. From these we shall make a few extracts, and suffer him to draw the portrait for himself.

His admiration of the works of Nature:

I never fram'd a wish, or form'd a plan,
That flatter'd me with hopes of earthly bliss
But there I laid the scene. There early stray'd
My fancy, ere yet liberty of choice
Had found me, or the hope of being free.
My very dreams were rural; rural too
The first-born efforts of my youthful muse,
Sportive and jingling her poetic bells,
Ere yet her ear was mistress of their pow'rs.
No bard could please me but whose lyre was tun'd
To Nature's praises.

Task, book iv.

The love of Nature's works
Is an ingredient in the compound man,
Infus'd at the creation of the kind.
This obtains in all,
That all discern a beauty in his works,
And all can taste them. Minds, that have been form'd
And tutor'd with a relish more exact,
But none without some relish, none unmov'd.
It is a flame that dies not even there
Where nothing feeds it: neither business, crowds,
Nor habits of luxurious city-life,
Whatever else they smother of true worth
In human bosoms, quench it or abate.
The villas, with which London stands begirt,
Like a swarth Indian with his belt or beads,
Prove it. A breath of unadult'rate air,
The glimpse of a green pasture, how they cheer
The citizen, and brace his languid frame!

Book iv.

God seen, and adored, in the works of Nature:

Not a flow'r
But shows some touch, in freckle, streak, or stain,

Of his unrivall'd pencil. He inspires
Their balmy odours, and imparts their hues,
And bathes their eyes with nectar, and includes,
In grains as countless as the sea-side sands,
The forms, with which he sprinkles all the earth.

Book vi.

His fondness for retirement:

Since then, with few associates, in remote
And silent woods I wander, far from those
My former partners of the peopled scene;
With few associates, and not wishing more.
Here much I ruminate, as much I may,
With other views of men and manners now
Than once, and others of a life to come.
I see that all are wand'rers, gone astray,
Each in his own delusions; they are lost
In chase of fancied happiness, still woo'd
And never won. Dream after dream ensues;
And still they dream that they shall still succeed,
And still are disappointed. Rings the world
With the vain stir. I sum up half mankind,
And add two-thirds of the remaining half,
And find the total of their hopes and fears
Dreams, empty dreams. Book iii.

His love for his country:

England, with all thy faults, I love thee still—
My country! and, while yet a nook is left,
Where English minds and manners may be found,
Shall be constrain'd to love thee. Tho' thy clime
Be fickle, and thy year most part deform'd
With dripping rains, or wither'd by a frost,
I would not yet exchange thy sullen skies,
And fields without a flow'r, for warmer France
With all her vines; nor for Ausonia's groves
Of golden fruitage, and her myrtle bow'rs.

Book ii.

His humane and generous feelings:

I was born of woman, and drew milk
As sweet as charity from human breasts.
I think, articulate, I laugh and weep,
And exercise all functions of a man.
How then should I and any man that lives
Be strangers to each other? Pierce my vein,
Take of the crimson stream meand'ring there,
And catechise it well; apply thy glass,
Search it, and prove now if it be not blood
Congenial with thine own.

Book iii.

His love of liberty:

Oh Liberty! the prisoner's pleasing dream,
The poet's muse, his passion and his theme;
Genius is thine, and thou art fancy's nurse;
Lost without thee the ennobling powers of verse;
Heroic song from thy free touch acquires
Its clearest tone, the rapture it inspires:
Place me where winter breathes his keenest air,
And I will sing, if liberty be there;
And I will sing at liberty's dear feet,
In Afric's torrid clime, or India's fiercest heat.

Table Talk.

'Tis liberty alone, that gives the flow'r
Of fleeting life its lustre and perfume;
And we are weeds without it.

Task, book v.

His depressive malady and the source of its cure:

I was a stricken deer, that left the herd
Long since; with many an arrow deep infix'd
My panting side was charg'd, when I withdrew
To seek a tranquil death in distant shades.

There was I found by one, who had himself
Been hurt by th' archers. In his side he bore,
And in his hands and feet, the cruel scars.*
With gentle force soliciting the darts,
He drew them forth, and heal'd, and bade me live.
Book iii.

The employment of his time, and design of his life and writings:

Me therefore studious of laborious ease,
Not slothful, happy to deceive the time,
Not waste it, and aware that human life
Is but a loan to be repaid with use,
When He shall call his debtors to account,
From whom are all our blessings; business finds
E'en here: while sedulous I seek t' improve,
At least neglect not, or leave unemploy'd,
The mind he gave me; driving it, though slack
Too oft, and much impeded in its work
By causes not to be divulg'd in vain,
To its just point—*the service of mankind.*
Book iii.

But all is in his hand, whose praise I seek.
In vain the poet sings, and the world hears,
If he regard not, though divine the theme.
'Tis not in artful measures, in the chime
And idle tinkling of a minstrel's lyre,
To charm his ear whose eye is on the heart,
Whose frown can disappoint the proudest strain,
Whose approbation—prosper even mine.
Book vi.

The office of doing justice to the poetical genius of Cowper has been assigned to an individual so well qualified to execute it with taste and ability, that the Editor begs thus publicly to record his

* The Saviour.

acknowledgments and his unmingled satisfaction. The bowers of the Muses are not unknown to the Rev. John Cunningham, and, in contemplating the poetical labours of others, he might, with a small variation, justly apply to himself the well-known exclamation, "Ed anch'io son pittore."*

All therefore that seems necessary is, simply to illustrate the beauties of Cowper's poetry in the same manner as we have exhibited his personal character. We shall present a brief series of poetical portraits.

The following portrait of Lord Chatham is drawn with great force and spirit.

In him Demosthenes was heard again;
And freedom taught him her Athenian strain.
She clothed him with authority and awe,
Spoke from his lips, and in his looks gave law.
His speech, his form, his action, full of grace,
And all his country beaming in his face,
He stood, as some inimitable hand
Would strive to make a Paul or Tully stand.
No sycophant or slave, that dared oppose
Her sacred cause, but trembled when he rose;
And every venal stickler for the yoke
Felt himself crushed at the first word he spoke.
Table Talk.

Sir Joshua Reynolds:

There, touch'd by Reynolds, a dull blank becomes
A lucid mirror, in which Nature sees
All her reflected features.

* Attributed to Correggio, after contemplating the works of Raphael.

Bacon the sculptor:

Bacon there
Gives more than female beauty to a stone,
And Chatham's eloquence to marble lips.*

John Thornton, Esq:

Some men make gain a fountain, whence proceeds
A stream of liberal and heroic deeds;
The swell of pity, not to be confined
Within the scanty limits of the mind,
Disdains the bank, and throws the golden sands,
A rich deposit, on the bordering lands:
These have an ear for his paternal call,
Who make some rich for the supply of all;
God's gift with pleasure in his praise employ,
And Thornton is familiar with the joy.

Charity.

The martyrs of the Reformation:

Their blood is shed
In confirmation of the noblest claim,
Our claim to feed upon immortal truth,
To walk with God, to be divinely free,
To soar, and to anticipate the skies.
Yet few remember them. They liv'd unknown,
Till persecution dragg'd them into fame,
And chas'd them up to heav'n. Their ashes flew
—No marble tells us whither. With their names
No bard embalms and sanctifies his song:
And history, so warm on meaner themes,
Is cold on this. She execrates indeed
The tyranny that doom'd them to the fire,
But gives the glorious suff'rers little praise.

Task, book v.

* Alluding to the monument of Lord Chatham, in Westminster Abbey.

Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress :

O thou, whom, borne on fancy's eager wing
Back to the season of life's happy spring,
I pleas'd remember, and, while mem'ry yet
Holds fast her office here, can ne'er forget;
Ingenious dreamer, in whose well-told tale
Sweet fiction and sweet truth alike prevail;
Whose hum'rous vein, strong sense, and simple style,
May teach the gayest, make the gravest smile;
Witty, and well-employ'd, and, like thy Lord,
Speaking in parables his slighted word:
I name thee not, lest so despis'd a name
Should move a sneer at thy deserved fame:
Yet, e'en in transitory life's late day,
That mingles all my brown with sober gray,
Revere the man, whose Pilgrim marks the road,
And guides the Progress of the soul to God.

Tirocinium.

Brown, the rural designer :*

. . . . . Lo! he comes—
Th' omnipotent magician, Brown appears.
Down falls the venerable pile, th' abode
Of our forefathers, a grave whisker'd race,
But tasteless. Springs a palace in its stead,
But in a distant spot; where more expos'd
It may enjoy th' advantage of the north,
And agueish east, till time shall have transform'd
Those naked acres to a shelt'ring grove.
He speaks. The lake in front becomes a lawn,
Woods vanish, hills subside, and valleys rise,
And streams, as if created for his use,
Pursue the track of his directing wand,
Sinuous or straight, now rapid and now slow,

* Brown, in Cowper's time, was the great designer in the art of laying out grounds for the nobility and gentry.

Now murm'ring soft, now roaring in cascades,
E'en as he bids. Th' enraptur'd owner smiles.
'Tis finish'd. And yet, finish'd as it seems,
Still wants a grace, the loveliest it could show,
A mine to satisfy the enormous cost.

The Task, book iii.

London:

Oh! thou resort and mart of all the earth,
Chequer'd with all complexions of mankind,
And spotted with all crimes; in whom I see
Much that I love, and much that I admire,
And all that I abhor; thou freckled fair,
That pleases and yet shocks me, I can laugh,
And I can weep, can hope, and yet despond,
Feel wrath and pity when I think on thee!
Ten righteous would have sav'd a city once,
And thou hast many righteous.—Well for thee—
That salt preserves thee; more corrupted else,
And therefore more obnoxious at this hour,
Than Sodom in her day had power to be,
For whom God heard his Abram plead in vain.

THE CONTRAST.

Where finds Philosophy her eagle eye,
With which she gazes at yon burning disk
Undazzled, and detects and counts his spots?
In London. Where her implements exact,
With which she calculates, computes, and scans,
All distance, motion, magnitude, and now
Measures an atom, and now girds a world?
In London. Where has commerce such a mart,
So rich, so throng'd, so drain'd, and so supplied,
As London—opulent, enlarg'd, and still
Increasing, London? Babylon of old
Not more the glory of the earth than she,
A more accomplish'd world's chief glory now.

Book i.

The Gin Palace:

Behold the schools, in which plebeian minds
Once simple are initiated in arts,
Which some may practise with politer grace,
But none with readier skill!—'tis here they learn
The road, that leads from competence and peace
To indigence and rapine, till at last
Society, grown weary of the load,
Shakes her incumber'd lap, and casts them out.
But censure profits little: vain th' attempt
To advertise in verse a public pest,
That, like the filth with which the peasant feeds
His hungry acres, stinks, and is of use.
Th' excise is fatten'd with the rich result
Of all this riot, and ten thousand casks,
For ever dribbling out their base contents,
Touch'd by the Midas finger of the state,
Bleed gold for ministers to sport away.
Drink, and be mad then; 'tis your country bids!
Gloriously drunk obey th' important call!
Her cause demands the assistance of your throats;—
Ye all can swallow, and she asks no more.

Task, book iv.

We add a few short passages:

How sweet, how passing sweet, is solitude!
But grant me still a friend in my retreat
Whom I may whisper—solitude is sweet.

Not to understand a treasure's worth
Till time has stolen away the slighted good
Is cause of half the poverty we feel,
And makes the world the wilderness it is.

Not a year but pilfers as he goes
Some youthful grace, that age would gladly keep.

When one that holds communion with the skies
Has fill'd his urn where these pure waters rise,
And once more mingles with us meaner things,
'Tis even as if an angel shook his wings;
Immortal fragrance fills the circuit wide,
That tells us whence his treasures are supplied.

We must not omit a most splendid specimen of Cowper's poetic genius, entitled the "Yardley Oak." It is an unfinished poem, and supposed to have been written in the year 1791, and laid aside, without ever having been resumed, when his attention was engrossed with the edition of Milton. Whatever may be the history of this admirable fragment, it has justly acquired for Cowper the reputation of having produced one of the richest and most highly finished pieces of versification that ever flowed from the pen of a poet. Its existence even was unknown both to Dr. Johnson and Hayley, till the latter discovered it buried in a mass of papers. We subjoin in a note a letter addressed by Dr. Johnson to Hayley, containing further particulars.*

"* January 6, 1804.

"Among our dear Cowper's papers, I found the following memorandum:

YARDLEY OAK IN GIRTH, FEET 22, INCHES 6½.
THE OAK AT YARDLEY LODGE, FEET 28, INCHES 5.

As to Yardley Oak, it stands in Yardley Chase, where the Earls of Northampton have a fine seat. It was a favourite walk of our dear Cowper, and he once carried me to see that oak. I believe it is five miles at least from Weston Lodge. It is indeed a noble tree, perfectly sound, and stands in an open part of the Chase, with only one or two others near it, so as to be seen to advantage.

"With respect to the oak at Yardley Lodge, that is quite in

Though this fragment is inserted among the poems, we extract the following passages, as expressive of the vigour and inspiration of true poetic genius.

> Thou wast a bauble once, a cup and ball,
> Which babes might play with; and the thievish jay,
> Seeking her food, with ease might have purloin'd
> The auburn nut that held thee, swallowing down
> Thy yet close-folded latitude of boughs,
> And all thine embryo vastness at a gulp.
> But Fate thy growth decreed; autumnal rains
> Beneath thy parent tree mellow'd the soil,
> Design'd thy cradle; and a skipping deer,
> With pointed hoof dibbling the glebe, prepar'd
> The soft receptacle, in which, secure,
> Thy rudiments should sleep the winter through.
> So Fancy dreams.
>
> Time made thee what thou wast, king of the woods;
> And Time hath made thee what thou art—a cave
> For owls to roost in! Once thy spreading boughs
> O'erhung the champaign: and the numerous flocks,
> That graz'd it, stood beneath that ample cope
> Uncrowded, yet safe-shelter'd from the storm.
> No flock frequents thee now.

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decay—a pollard, and almost hollow. I took an excrescence from it in the year 1791, and, if I mistake not, Cowper told me it is said to have been an oak in the time of the Conqueror. This latter oak is in the road to the former, but not above half so far from Weston Lodge, being only just beyond Killick and Dinglederry. This is all I can tell you about the oaks. They were old acquaintance and great favourites of the bard. How rejoiced I am to hear that he has immortalized one of them in blank verse! Where could those one hundred and sixty-one lines lie hid? Till this very day I never heard of their existence, nor suspected it."

While thus through all the stages thou hast push'd
Of treeship—first a seedling, hid in grass;
Then twig; then sapling; and, as cen'try roll'd
Slow after century, a giant bulk
Of girth enormous, with moss-cushion'd root
Upheav'd above the soil, and sides imboss'd
With prominent wens globose—till, at the last,
The rottenness which time is charg'd to inflict
On other mighty ones found also thee.

Time was, when, settling on thy leaf, a fly
Could shake thee to the root—and time has been
When tempests could not.*

* The late Samuel Whitbread, Esq. was an enthusiastic admirer of the poetry of Cowper, and solicitous to obtain a relic of the Yardley Oak. Mr. Bull, of Newport Pagnel, promised to send a specimen, but some little delay having occurred, Mr. Whitbread addressed to him the following verses, which, emanating from such a man, and not having met the public eye, will, we are persuaded, be considered as a literary curiosity, and of no mean merit.

"Send me the precious bit of oak,
Which your own hand so fondly took
From off the consecrated tree,
A relic dear to you and me.
To many 'twould a bauble prove
Not worth the keeping,—Those who love
The teeming grand poetic mind,
Which God thought fit in chains to bind,
Of dreadful, dark, despairing gloom;
Yet left within such ample room,
For coruscations strong and bright:
Such beams of everlasting light,
As make men envy, love, and dread,
The structure of that wondrous head,
Must prize a bit of Judith's stem,
That brought to light that precious gem—
The fragment: which in verse sublime
Records her honours to all time"

With these acknowledged claims to popular favour, it is pleasing to reflect on the singular moderation of Cowper amidst the snares of literary fame. His motives seem to have been pure and simple, and his main design to elevate the character of the age, and to glorify God. He was not insensible to the value of applause, when conferred by a liberal and powerful mind, but even in this instance it was a subdued and chastened feeling. A more pleasing evidence could not be adduced than when Hayley, in one of his visits to Weston, brought a recent newspaper, containing a speech of Mr. Fox, in which that distinguished orator had quoted the following impressive verses on the Bastille, in the House of Commons.

Ye horrid tow'rs, the abode of broken hearts;
Ye dungeons, and ye cages of despair,
That monarchs have supplied from age to age
With music, such as suits their sov'reign ears,
The sighs and groans of miserable men!
There's not an English heart that would not leap,
To hear that ye were fall'n at last; to know,
That e'en our enemies, so oft employ'd
In forging chains for us, themselves were free.*

Mrs. Unwin discovered marks of vivid satisfaction, Cowper smiled, and was silent.†

* These lines were written prophetically, and previously to the event.

† The late Lord Erskine was a frequent reciter of passages from Cowper's poems. The Editor is indebted to E. H. Barker, Esq. of Thetford, for the following anecdote which was communicated to him by Joseph Jekyll, Esq. the eminent counsellor.

Mr. Jekyll was dining with Lord Oxford, and among the

We have mentioned how little Cowper was elated by praise. We shall now state how much he was depressed by unjust censure. His first volume of poems had been severely criticised by the Analytical Review. His feelings are recorded in the following (hitherto unpublished) letter to John Thornton, Esq.

Olney, May, 21, 1782.

Dear Sir—You have my sincere thanks for your obliging communication, both of my book to Dr. Franklin, and of his opinion of it to me. Some of the periodical critics I understand have spoken of it with contempt enough; but, while gentlemen of

company were Dr. Parr, Horne Tooke, Lord Erskine, and Mr. W. Scott, (brother to Lady Oxford.) Lord Erskine recited, in his admirable manner, the verses of Cowper about the *Captive*, without saying whose they were; Dr. Parr expressed great admiration of the verses, and said that he had never heard of them or seen them before; he inquired whose they were? H. Tooke said, "Why Cowper's." Dr. Parr said he had never read Cowper's poems. "Not read Cowper's poems!" said Horne Tooke, "and you never will, I suppose, Dr. Parr, till they are turned into Greek?" When the company went into the drawing-room, Lady Oxford presented Dr. Parr with a small edition of Cowper's Poems, and Mr. Jekyll was desired by her ladyship to write in the book, "From the Countess of Oxford to Dr. Parr." Horne Tooke wrote also underneath "Who never read the book," and signed his name to it: all present signed their names and added some remark, and among the rest W. Scott. At the sale of Dr. Parr's books, this volume fetched about five pounds, being considered valuable and curious, as the W. Scott signed was supposed to have been *Sir* W. Scott, (since Lord Stowell.) Lord Stowell afterward took great pains to contradict the report.

taste and candour have more favourable thoughts of it, I see reason to be less concerned than I have been about their judgment, hastily framed perhaps, and certainly not without prejudice against the subjects of which it treats.

Your friendly intimation of the Doctor's sentiments reached me very seasonably, just when, in a fit of despondence, to which no man is naturally more inclined, I had begun to regret the publication of it, and had consequently resolved to write no more. For if a man has the fortune to please none but his friends and their connexions, he has reason enough to conclude that he is indebted for the measure of success he meets with, not to the real value of his book, but to the partiality of the few that approve it. But I now feel myself differently affected towards my favourite employment; for which sudden change in my sentiments I may thank you and your correspondent in France, his entire unacquaintedness with me, a man whom he never saw, nor will see, his character as a man of sense and condition, and his acknowledged merit as an ingenious and elegant writer, and especially his having arrived at an age when men are not to be pleased they know not why, are so many circumstances that give a value to his commendations, and make them the most flattering a poor poet could receive, quite out of conceit with himself, and quite out of heart with his occupations.

If you think it worth your while, when you write next to the Doctor, to inform him how much he has encouraged me by his approbation, and to add

my respects to him, you will oblige me still further; for next to the pleasure it would afford me to hear that it has been useful to any, I cannot have a greater, so far as my volume is in question, than to hear that it has pleased the judicious.

Mrs. Unwin desires me to add her respectful compliments.

I am, dear Sir,
Your affectionate and most obedient servant,
W. C.

To John Thornton, Esq.
Clapham, Surrey.

Through this harsh and unwarrantable exercise of criticism, the world might never have possessed the immortal poem of "The Task," if an American philosopher had not awarded that honourable meed of just praise and commendation, which an English critic thought proper to withhold.

But it is not merely the poetic claims of Cowper which have earned for him so just a title to public gratitude and praise. It would be unjust not to bestow particular notice on a talent, in which he singularly excelled, and one that friendship ought especially to honour, as she is indebted to it for a considerable portion of her happiest sources of delight—we mean the talent of writing letters.

Those of Pope are generally considered to be too laboured, and deficient in ease. Swift is frequently ill-natured and offensive. Gray is admirable, but

not equal to Cowper either in the graces of simplicity, or in the warmth of affection.

The letters of Cowper are not distinguished by any remarkable superiority of thought or diction; it is rather the easy and graceful flow of sentiment and feeling, his enthusiastic love of nature, his touching representations of common and domestic life, and above all, the ingenuous disclosure of the recesses of his own heart, that constitute their charm and excellence. They form a kind of biographical sketch, drawn by his own hand. His poetry proclaims the author, his correspondence depicts the man. We see him in his walks, in the privacy of his study, in his daily occupations, amid the endearments of home, and with all the qualities that inspire friendship, and awaken confidence and love. We learn what he thought, what he said, his views of men and manners, his personal habits and history. His ideas usually flow without premeditation. All is natural and easy. There is no display, no evidence of conscious superiority, no concealment of his real sentiments. He writes as he feels and thinks, and with such an air of truth and frankness, that he seems to stamp upon the letter the image of his mind, with the same fidelity of resemblance that the canvass represents his external form and features. We see in them the sterling good sense of a man, the playfulness and simplicity of a child, and the winning softness and delicacy of a woman's feelings. He can write upon any subject, or write without one. He can embellish what is real by the graces of his imagination, or invest what is imagi-

nary with the semblance of reality. He can smile or he can weep, philosophize or trifle, descant with fervour on the loveliness of nature, talk about his tame hares, or cast the overflowings of an affectionate heart at the shrine of friendship. His Correspondence is a wreath of many flowers. His letters will always be read with delight and interest, and by many, perhaps, will be considered to be the rivals of his poems. They are justly entitled to the eulogium which we know to have been pronounced upon them by Charles Fox,—that of being "the best specimens of epistolary excellence in the English language."

Among men distinguished by classical taste and acquirements, his Latin poems will ever be considered as elegant specimens of composition, and formed after the best models of antiquity.

There is one exquisite little gem, in Latin hexameters, entitled "Votum," beginning thus:

O matutini rores, auræque salubres.

which we believe has never received an English dress. A gentleman of literary taste has kindly furnished us with a pleasing version, which we are happy to subjoin in a note.* We trust the author will excuse the insertion of his name.

* THE WISH.

"Ye verdant hills, ye soft umbrageous vales,
Fann'd by light Zephyr's health-inspiring gales;
Ye woods, whose boughs in rich luxuriance wave;
Ye sparkling rivulets, whose waters lave

We have thus endeavoured to exhibit the singular versatility of Cowper's genius, and the combination of powers not often united in the same mind. All that now remains is to consider the consecration of these faculties to high and holy ends; and the influence of his writings on the literary, the moral, and religious character of the age.

The great end and aim which he proposed to himself as an author, has already been illustrated from his writings; we add one more passage to show the sanctity of his character.

Since the dear hour that brought me to thy foot,
And cut up all my follies by the root,
I never trusted in an arm but thine,
Nor hoped, but in thy righteousness divine.
My prayers and alms, imperfect and defiled,
Were but the feeble efforts of a child;

Those meads, where erst, at morning's dewy prime,
(Reckless of shoals beneath the stream of Time,)
My vagrant feet your flowery margin press'd,
Whilst Heaven gave back the sunshine in my breast:—
O, would the powers that rule my wayward lot
Restore me to the lone paternal cot!
There, far from folly, fraud's ensnaring wiles,
The world's dark frown, or still more dangerous smiles,
Let peaceful duties peaceful hours engage;
Till, winding gently down the slope of age,
Tranquil I mark life's swift-declining day
Fling deeper shades athwart my lessening way;
And pleased, at last put off this mortal coil,
Again to mingle with its kindred soil
Beneath the grassy turf, or silent stone;
Unseen the path I trod, my resting-place unknown."

T. Ostler

Howe'er performed, it was their brightest part,
That they proceeded from a grateful heart.
Cleansed in thine own all-purifying blood,
Forgive their evil, and accept their good.
I cast them at thy feet—my only plea
Is what it was—dependence upon thee:
While struggling in the vale of tears below,
That never failed, nor shall it fail me now.

Truth.

We confess that we are edified by this simple, yet sublime and holy piety.

It was from this source that Cowper drew the materials that have given to his writings the character of so elevated a morality. Too seldom, alas! have poets consecrated their powers to the cause of divine truth. In modern times, especially, we have witnessed a voluptuous imagery and appeal to the passions, in some highly-gifted writers, which have contributed to undermine public morality, and to tarnish the purity of female minds. But it is the honourable distinction of Cowper's poetry, that nothing is to be found to excite a blush on the cheek of modesty, nor a single line that requires to be blotted out. He has done much to introduce a purer and more exalted taste; he is the Poet of Nature, the Poet of the Heart and Conscience, and what is a still higher praise, the Poet of Christianity. He mingled the waters of Helicon with the hallowed streams of Siloam, and planted the cross amid the bowers of the muses. Johnson, indeed, has remarked that religion is not susceptible of poetry. If this be true, it can arise only from the want of religious authors and religious readers. But we venture to *deny the position*, and to maintain that religion

ennobles whatever it touches. In architecture, what building ever rivalled the magnificence of the temple of Jerusalem, St. Peter's in Rome, or the imposing grandeur of St. Paul's? In painting, what power of art can surpass the Transfiguration of a Raphael, the Ecce Homo of a Guido, or the Elevation and Descent of the Cross in a Rubens? In poetry, where shall we find a nobler production of human genius than the Paradise Lost? Again, let us listen to the language of the pious Fénelon:

"No Greek or Latin poetry is comparable to the Psalms. That which begins, 'The God of gods, the Lord hath spoken, and hath called up the earth,' exceeds whatever human imagination has produced. Neither Homer, nor any other poet, equals Isaiah, in describing the majesty of God, in whose presence empires are as a grain of sand, and the whole universe as a tent, which to-day is set up, and removed to-morrow. Sometimes, as when he paints the charms of peace, Isaiah has the softness and sweetness of an eclogue; at others, he soars above mortal conception. But what is there in profane antiquity comparable to the wailings of Jeremiah, when he mourns over the calamities of his people? or to Nahum, when he foresees in spirit the downfall of Nineveh, under the assault of an innumerable army? We almost behold the formidable host, and hear the arms and the chariots. Read Daniel, denouncing to Belshazzar the vengeance of God, ready to fall upon him; compare it with the most sublime passages of pagan antiquity; you find nothing comparable to it. It must be added that, in the Scriptures, every thing sustains itself; whether

we consider the historical, the legal, or the poetical part of it, the proper character appears in all."

It would be singular, if a subject which unveils to the eye of faith the glories of the invisible world, and which is to be a theme of gratitude and praise throughout eternity, could inspire no ardour in a poet's soul; and if the wings of imagination could take flight to every world save to that which is eternal. We leave our Montgomeries to refute so gross an error, and appeal with confidence to the page of Cowper.

We quote the following passage to show that religion can not only supply the noblest theme, but also communicate a corresponding sublimity of thought and language. It is the glowing and poetical description of the Millennial period, commencing with

Sweet is the harp of prophecy.

We have room only for the concluding portion—

One song employs all nations, and all cry,
"Worthy the Lamb, for he was slain for us!"
The dwellers in the vales and on the rocks
Shout to each other, and the mountain tops
From distant mountains catch the flying joy;
Till nation after nation taught the strain,
Earth rolls the rapturous Hosanna round.
Behold the measure of the promise fill'd;
See Salem built, the labour of a god!
Bright as a sun the sacred city shines;
All kingdoms and all princes of the earth
Flock to that light; the glory of all lands
Flows into her; unbounded is her joy,
And endless her increase. Thy rams are there,
Nebaioth, and the flocks of Kedar there;
The looms of Ormus, and the mines of Ind,

> And Saba's spicy groves pay tribute there.
> Praise is in all her gates: upon her walls,
> And in her streets, and in her spacious courts,
> Is heard salvation. Eastern Java there
> Kneels with the native of the farthest west;
> And Æthiopia spreads abroad the hand,
> And worships. Her report has travell'd forth
> Into all lands. From every clime they come
> To see thy beauty, and to share thy joy,
> O Sion! An assembly such as Earth
> Saw never, such as Heaven stoops down to see.
>
> *Task*, book vi.

By this devotional strain of poetry, so adapted to the spirit of the present age, Cowper is rapidly accomplishing a revolution in the public taste, and creating a new race of readers. He is purifying the literary atmosphere from its noxious vapours. The muse has too long taken her flight *downwards*; Cowper leads her to hold communion with the skies. He has taught us that literary celebrity, acquired at the cost of public morals, is but an inglorious triumph, and merits no better title than that of splendid infamy. His page has fully proved that the varied field of nature, the scenes of domestic life, and the rich domain of moral and religious truth, are sufficiently ample for the exercise of poetic taste and fancy; while they never fail to tranquillize the mind, to invigorate the principles, and to enlarge the bounds of virtuous pleasure.

The writings of Cowper have also been highly beneficial to the Church of England. If he has been a severe, he has also been a faithful, monitor. We allude to such passages as the following—

> There stands the messenger of truth: there stands
> The legate of the skies!—His theme divine,

His office sacred, his credentials clear.
By him the violated law speaks out
Its thunders; and by him, in strains as sweet,
As angels use, the Gospel whispers peace.
He 'stablishes the strong, restores the weak,
Reclaims the wand'rer, binds the broken heart.
And, arm'd himself in panoply complete
Of heav'nly temper, furnishes with arms,
Bright as his own, and trains, by ev'ry rule
Of holy discipline, to glorious war,
The sacramental host of God's elect!
Are all such teachers? would to Heav'n all were!
Task, book ii.

I venerate the man, whose heart is warm,
Whose hands are pure, whose doctrine and whose life,
Coincident, exhibit lucid proof
That he is honest in the sacred cause.
To such I render more than mere respect,
Whose actions say that they respect themselves.
But loose in morals, and in manners vain,
In conversation frivolous, in dress
Extreme—
From such Apostles, O ye mitred heads,
Preserve the church! and lay not careless hands
On sculls that cannot teach and will not learn.

There was a period when the chase was not considered to be incompatible with the functions of the sacred office. On this subject Cowper exclaims with just and indignant feeling—

Is this the path of sanctity? Is this
To stand a way mark in the road to bliss?
Go cast your orders at your bishop's feet,
Send your dishonour'd gown to Monmouth-street!
The sacred function in your hands is made—
Sad sacrilege! no function, but a trade!
The Progress of Error.

The danger of popular applause:

O popular Applause! what heart of man
Is proof against thy sweet seducing charms?
The wisest and the best feel urgent need
Of all their caution in the gentlest gales;
But swell'd into a gust—who then, alas!
With all his canvass set, and inexpert,
And therefore heedless, can withstand thy power?
Ah, spare your idol! think him human still.
Charms he may have, but he has frailties too!
Dote not too much, nor spoil what ye admire.

These rebukes, pungent as they are, were needed. The works of Mrs. Hannah More bear unquestionable testimony to this fact. But we may now record with gratitude a very perceptible change, and appeal to the evidences of reviving piety among all classes of her clergy.

Though the singular and mysterious malady of Cowper has been the occasion of repeated remark, yet we cannot dismiss the subject without a few concluding reflections.

In contrasting with his other letters the correspondence with Newton, the chosen depositary of all his secret woe, it is difficult to recognise in the writer the same identity of character. His mind appears to have undergone some transforming process, and the gay and lively tints of his sportive imagination to be suddenly shrouded in the gloom of a mysterious and appalling darkness. We seem to enter into the regions of sorrow and despair, and to trace the terrific inscription so finely drawn by a poet, in his celebrated "Inferno:"

" Voi ch' entrate lasciate ogni speranza." *

Ye who enter here leave all hope behind.

In contemplating this afflicting dispensation, and referring every event, as we must, to the appointment or permissive Providence of God, we feel constrained to exclaim with the patriarch, " *The thunder of his power who can understand?*" † But life, as Bishop Hall observes, is made up of perturbations; and those seem most subject to their occurrence, who are distinguished by the gifts of rank, fortune, or genius. Such is the discipline which the moral Governor of the world sees fit to employ for the purification of their possessors! In recording the lot of genius, Milton, it is known, was blind, Pope was afflicted with sickness, and Tasso, Swift, Smart, and Collins, were exposed to the aberrations of reason. " Moralists," says Dr. Johnson, " talk of the uncertainty of fortune, and of the transitoriness of beauty; but it is yet more dreadful to consider that the powers of the mind are equally liable to change—that understanding may make its appearance and depart, that it may blaze and expire." It seems as if the mind were too ethereal to be confined within the bounds of its earthly prison, or that the too frequent and intense exercise of thought disturbs the digestive organs, and lays the foundation of hypochondriacal feelings, which cloud the serenity of the soul. It is painful to reflect how much our sensations of comfort and happiness depend on the even flow and circulation of the

* See the " Inferno" of Dante, where this motto is inscribed over the entrance into the abodes of woe.

† *Job xxvi.* 14.

blood. But the connexion of physical and moral causes has been the subject of philosophical remark in all ages. The somewhat analogous case of the celebrated Dr. Johnson seems to have been overlooked by preceding biographers of Cowper. "The morbid melancholy," observes Boswell, "which was lurking in his constitution, and to which we may ascribe those peculiarities, and that aversion to regular life, which, at a very early period, marked his character, gathered such strength in his twentieth year, as to afflict him in a dreadful manner. While he was at Lichfield, in the college vacation, in 1729, he felt himself overwhelmed with a horrible hypochondria, with perpetual irritation, fretfulness, and impatience; and with a dejection, gloom, and despair, which made existence misery. From this dismal malady he never afterwards was perfectly relieved; and all his labours, and all his enjoyments, were but temporary interruptions of its baleful influence."

Let those to whom Providence has assigned a humbler path, learn the duty of contentment, and be thankful that if they are denied the honours attendant on rank and genius, they are at least exempted from its trials. For where there are *heights*, there are *depths;* and he who occupies the summit is often seen descending into the valley of humiliation.

That a similar morbid temperament may be traced in the case of Cowper is indisputable; nor can a more conclusive evidence be adduced than the words of his own Memoir:—"I was struck, not long after my settlement in the Temple, with such

a dejection of spirits, as none but they who have felt the same can have the least conception of. Day and night I was upon the rack, lying down in horror, and rising up in despair." * In his subsequent attack, religion became an adjunct, not a cause, for he describes himself at that period as having lived without religion. The impression under which he laboured was therefore manifestly not suggested by a theological creed, but was the delusion of a distempered fancy. Every other view is founded on misconception, and must inevitably tend to mislead the public.

The History of Cowper suggests also some important admonitions, which we beg to impress on the attention of the reader.

The fruitful source of all his misery was the indulgence of an over-excited state of feeling. His mind was never quiescent. Occurrences, which an ordinary degree of self-possession would have met with calmness, or passive indifference, were to him the subject of mental agony and distress. His imagination gave magnitude to trifles, till what was at first ideal, at length assumed the character of a terrible reality. He was always anticipating evil; and so powerful is the influence of fancy that what we dread we seldom fail to realize. Thus Swift lived in the constant fear of mental imbecility, and at length incurred the calamity. We scarcely know a spectacle more pitiable, and yet more reprehensible. For what is the use of reason, if we reject its dictates? or the promise of the Spirit to

* See page 270.

help our infirmities, if we nevertheless yield to their sway? How important in the education of youth to repress the first symptoms of nervous irritability, to invigorate the principles, and to train the mind to habits of self-discipline, and firm reliance upon God! The far greater proportion of human trials originate not in the appointment of Providence, but may be traced to the want of a well-ordered and duly regulated mind; to the ascendancy of passion, and to the absence of mental and moral energy. It is possible to indulge in a state of mind that shall rob every blessing of half its enjoyment, and give to every trial a double portion of bitterness.

We turn with delight to a more edifying feature in his character—

His submission under this dark dispensation.

It is easy to exhibit the triumphs of faith in moments of exultation and joy; but the vivid energy of true faith is never more powerfully exemplified, than when it is left to its own naked exercise, unaided by the influence of exciting causes. It is amid the desolation of hope, and when the iron enters into the soul—it is amid pain, depression, and sorrow, when the eye is suffused with tears, and every nerve vibrates with emotion—to be able to exclaim at such a moment, "Here I am, let him do with me as seemeth him good;"* this is indeed the faith which is of the operation of the Spirit, which none but God can give, and which will finally lead to a triumphant crown.

That the mind should still indulge its sorrows, in moments of awakened feeling, is natural. On this

* Letter to Newton, May 20, 1786.

subject we know nothing more touching than the manner in which Cowper parodies and appropriates to himself Milton's affecting lamentation over his own blindness :*

> Seasons return, but not to me returns
> God, or the sweet approach of heavenly day,
> Or sight of cheering truth, or pardon seal'd,
> Or joy, or hope, or Jesus' face divine;
> But cloud, &c.

To this quotation we might add the affecting conclusion of the poem of " The Castaway."

> We perish'd each alone;
> But I beneath a rougher sea,
> And whelm'd in deeper gulfs than he.†

The overruling Providence of God is no less discernible in this event.

The severest trials are not without their alleviation, nor the accompaniment of some gracious purpose. Had it not been for Cowper's visitation, the world might never have been presented with The Task, nor the Church of Christ been edified with the Olney Hymns. He was constrained to write, in order to divert his melancholy. " Despair," he observes, " made amusement necessary, and I found poetry the most agreeable amusement." ‡ " In such a situation of mind, encompassed by the midnight of absolute despair, and a thousand times filled with unspeakable horror, I first commenced an author. Distress drove me to it; and the impossibility of subsisting without some employment, still

* Paradise Lost, book iii. † See p. 252.

‡ Letter to Newton, Aug. 6, 1785.

recommends it." * How wonderful are the ways of God, and what a powerful commentary on Cowper's own celebrated hymn—

God moves in a mysterious way, &c.

It will probably be found, at the last great day, that the darkest dispensations were the most essential links in the chain of providential dealings; and that what we least understood, and often contemplated with solemn awe on earth, will form the subject of never-ceasing praise in eternity.

Whatever were the trials of Cowper, they are now terminated.

It will be remembered that his kinsman saw, or thought he saw, in the features of his deceased friend, "an expression of calmness and composure, mingled, as it were, with holy surprise." * We would not attach too much importance to a look, but rather rest our hopes of Cowper's happiness on the covenanted mercy and faithfulness of God. Still the supposition is natural and soothing; and we by no means think it improbable that the disembodied spirit might communicate to the earthly lineaments, in the moment of departure, the impression of its own heavenly joy. And O! what must have been the expression of that surprise and joy, when, as his immortal spirit ascended to him that gave it, instead of beholding the averted eye of an offended God, he recognised the radiant smiles of his reconciled countenance, and the caresses of his tenderness and love—when all heaven burst upon his astonished

* Letter to Newton, May, 20, 1786.

† See page 256.

view; and when, amid angels, and archangels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, he was invited to bear his part in the glorious song of the redeemed, *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests for ever and ever.*

But it is time to close our remarks on the Life and Writings of Cowper. It is a name that has long entwined itself around the affections of our heart, and appealed, from early days, both to conscience and feeling. We lament our inadequacy to fulfil all the duties of the present important undertaking, but the motives which have powerfully urged us to engage in it, are founded on a wish to exhibit Cowper in accordance with his own Christian character and principles; to vindicate him from prevailing misconceptions; and in imputing the gloom of depression, under which he laboured, to its true causes, so to treat this delicate subject as to make it the occasion of sympathizing interest, and not of revolting and agonized feelings. The Private Correspondence, in this respect, is invaluable, and absolutely essential to the clear elucidation of his case. Other documents have also been inserted that never appeared in any previous biography of Cowper; and private sources of information have been explored, not easily accessible to other inquirers. We trust this object has been attained, and the hope of so important a result is a source of cheering consolation. The history of Cowper is fruitful in the pathetic, the sublime, and the terrible, so as to produce an effect that seems almost to

realize the fictions of romance. A life composed of such materials cannot fail to command attention. It possesses all the bolder lineaments of character, relieved by the familiar, the tender, the sportive, and the gay. Emotions are thus excited in which the heart loves to indulge; for who does not delight alternately in the calmness of repose, and in the excitement of awakened feeling?

But, independently of the interest created by the events of Cowper's life, there is something singularly impressive in the mechanism of his mind. It is so curiously wrought, and wonderfully made, as to form a subject for contemplation to the philosopher, the Christian, and the medical observer. The union of these several qualifications seems necessary to analyze the interior springs of thought and action, to mark the character of God's providential dealings, and to trace the influence of morbid temperament on the powers of the intellect and the passions of the soul. His mind presents the most wonderful combinations of the grave and the gay, the social and the retired, ministering to the spiritual joy of others, yet enveloped in the gloom of darkness, enchained with fetters, yet vigorous and free, soaring to the heights of Zion, yet precipitated to the depths below. It resembles a beautiful landscape, overshadowed by a dark and impending cloud. Every moment we expect the cloud to burst on the head of the devoted sufferer; and the awful anticipation would be fulfilled, were it not that a divine hand, which guides every event, and without which not even a sparrow falls to the ground, interposes and arrests the

shock. Upwards of twenty years expired, during which he was thus graciously upheld. He then began to sink under his accumulated sorrows. But it is worthy of observation, that during this period his mind never suffered *a total alienation.* It was a partial eclipse, not night, nor yet day. He lived long enough both for himself and others, sufficient to discharge all the claims of an affectionate friendship, and to raise to himself an imperishable name on the noble foundation of moral virtue. At length, when he stood alone, as it were, like a column in the melancholy waste; when he was his own world, and the solitary agent, around which clung the sensations of a heart always full, and the reflections of a mind unconscious of a pause—he died. But his last days and moments were soothed by the offices of Christian kindness, and the most disinterested regard. His beloved kinsman never left him till he had closed his eyes in death, and till the disembodied spirit at length found the rest in heaven, which for ever obliterated all its earthly sorrows.

And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him. And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light; and they shall reign for ever and ever.—*Rev.* xxii. 3, 4, 5.

NOTES TO THE FIFTH VOLUME.

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THE REV. MR. HURDIS.

This amiable and much esteemed character, and endeared as one of the friends of Cowper, was born at Bishopstone in Sussex, in 1763. He was elected Professor of Poetry at Oxford in 1793, and died at a premature age, in 1801. His claims as an author principally rest on his once popular poem of the "Village Curate." He also wrote "A Vindication of the University of Oxford from the Aspersions of Mr. Gibbon." His works are published in 3 vols.

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"It is no disparagement to Milton to have been indebted to the conceptions of another for the origin of his great undertaking."

In addition to the Adamo of Andreini, Milton is said to have been indebted to the Du Bartas of Sylvester, and to the Adamus Exul of Grotius. Hayley, in his Life of Milton, enumerates also a

brief list of Italian writers, who may have possibly thrown some suggestions into the mind of the poet. But the boldest act of imposition, ever recorded in the annals of literature, is the charge preferred against Milton by Lauder, who endeavoured to prove that he was "the worst and greatest of all plagiaries." He asserted that "Milton had borrowed the substance of whole books together, and that there was scarcely a single thought or sentiment in his poem which he had not stolen from some author or other, notwithstanding his vain pretence to *things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme.*" In support of this charge, he was base enough to corrupt the text of those poets, whom he produced as evidences against the originality of Milton, by interpolating several verses either of his own fabrication, or from the Latin translation of *Paradise Lost*, by William Hog. This gross libel he entitled an "Essay on Milton's Use and Imitation of the Moderns;" and so far imposed on Dr. Johnson, by his representations, as to prevail upon him to furnish a preface to his work. The public are indebted to Dr. Douglas, the Bishop of Salisbury, for first detecting this imposture, in a pamphlet entitled "Milton vindicated from the charge of Plagiarism brought against him by Mr. Lauder." Thus exposed to infamy and contempt, he made a public recantation of his error, and soon after quitted England for the West Indies, where he died in 1771.

THE PORTRAITS OF COWPER.

There were three portraits of Cowper, taken respectively by Sir Thomas Lawrence, Abbot, and Romney. The reader may be anxious to learn which is entitled to be considered the best resemblance. The editor is able to satisfy this inquiry, on the joint authority of the three most competent witnesses, the late Rev. Dr. Johnson, the present Dowager Lady Throckmorton, and John Higgins, Esq., formerly of Weston. They all agree in assigning the superiority to the portrait by Abbot; and in evidence of this, all have repeated the anecdote mentioned by Cowper, of his dog Beau going up to the picture, and shaking his tail, in token of recognition. It is an exact resemblance of his form, features, manner, and costume. That by Romney was said to resemble him *at the moment it was taken*, but it was his *then* look, not his customary and more placid features. There is an air of wildness in it, expressive of a disordered mind, and which the shock, produced by the paralytic attack of Mrs. Unwin, was rapidly impressing on his countenance. This portrait has always been considered as awakening distressing emotions in the beholder. The portrait by Sir Thomas Lawrence is the most pleasing, but not so exact and faithful a resemblance. There is however a character of peculiar interest in it, and he is represented in the cap which he was accustomed to wear in a morning, presented to him by Lady Hesketh. It was on this picture that the following beautiful lines were composed by the late Rev. Dr. Randolph.

ON SEEING A SKETCH OF COWPER BY LAWRENCE.

Sweet bard! whose mind thus pictured in thy face,
O'er every feature spreads a nobler grace;
Whose keen, but softened eye appears to dart
A look of pity through the human heart;
To search the secrets of man's inward frame,
To weep with sorrow o'er his guilt and shame;
Sweet bard! with whom, in sympathy of choice,
I've ofttimes left the world at Nature's voice,
To join the song that all her creatures raise,
To carol forth their great Creator's praise;
Or 'rapt in visions of immortal day,
Have gazed on Truth in Zion's heavenly way:
Sweet Bard!—may this thine image, all I know,
Or ever may, of Cowper's form below,
Teach one who views it with a Christian's love,
To seek and find thee, in the realms above.

Page 205.

"Bentley's Milton, Newton's, and Warton's Edition of the Minor Poems."

The editions of Milton by which Cowper was assisted, in the execution of his undertaking, were those of Bentley, Newton, and Warton. That of Bentley has always been considered a complete failure. It is remarkable for the boldness of its conjectural emendations, and for the liberties taken with the text. An amusing anecdote is recorded on this subject. To a friend expostulating with him on the occasion, and urging that it was impossible for Milton, in so many instances, to have written as he alleged, he replied, with his characteristic spirit, "then he ought to have written *so.*" *Bishop* Newton's edition has acquired just

celebrity, and has served as the basis of all subsequent editions. It has been deservedly called "the best edited English Classic up to the period of its publication." Warton's edition of "The Juvenile and Minor Poems" discovers a classical and elegant taste. Its merit, however, is greatly impaired by the severity of its censures on Milton's republican and religious principles. It was to rescue that great poet from the animadversions of Warton and Dr. Johnson that Hayley engaged in a life of Milton, which does honour to the manliness and generosity of his feelings. But the most powerful defence is that of the Rev. Dr. Symmons, who, with considerable vigour of thought and language, has taken a most comprehensive view of the character and prose writings of Milton. He would have been entitled to distinguished praise, if, in vindicating the republicanism of Milton, he had not deeply fallen into it himself. In the present day the clouds of prejudice seem to have subsided, and the errors of the politician are deservedly forgotten in the celebrity of the poet. There was a period when, according to Dr. Johnson, a monument to Philips, with an inscription by Atterbury, in which he was said to be *soli Miltono secundus*, was refused admittance by Dean Sprat into Westminster Abbey, on the ground of its "being too detestable to be read on the wall of a building dedicated to devotion."

The honours of a monument were at length conceded to Milton himself; but the beautiful and elegant Latin inscription, composed by Dr. George, Provost of King's College, Cambridge, shows that

it was thought necessary to apologize for its admission into that sacred repository of kings and prelates.*

Page 307.

"Young Russel was cut off by a premature death."

Shortness of life seems to have been peculiar to this family. The writer well remembers the two last baronets, viz. Sir John Russel, whose form was so weak and fragile, that, when resident at the University of Oxford, he was supported by instruments of steel. He died at the early age of twenty-one. 2ndly. Sir George Russel, his brother, who survived only till his twenty-second year. The editor followed him to his grave. The family residence was at Chequers, in Buckinghamshire, an ancient seat, and restored at great expense by these last direct descendants of their race. Chequers was formerly noted as the place where Hampden, Cromwell, and a few others, held their secret meetings, and concerted their measures of opposition against the government of Charles I. The estate afterwards devolved to Robert Greenhill, Esq.

* We cannot refrain from enriching our pages with this much admired Epitaph.

"Augusti regum cineres, sanctæque favillæ
Heroum, Vosque O! venerandi nominis umbræ!
Parcite, quod vestris, infensum regibus olim,
Sedibus infertur nomen: liceatque supremis
Funeribus finire odia, et mors obruat iras.
Nunc sub fœderibus coeant felicibus, una
Libertas, et jus sacri inviolabile sceptri.
Rege sub *Auguste* fas sit laudare *Catonem*."

Page 387.

" Johnson has remarked that religion is not susceptible of poetry."

The reasons which he assigns, in justification of this opinion, are thus specified.

" Let no pious ear be offended if I advance, in opposition to many authorities, that poetical devotion cannot often please. The doctrines of religion may indeed be defended in a didactic poem; and he who has the happy power of arguing in verse, will not lose it because his subject is sacred. A poet may describe the beauty and the grandeur of nature, the flowers of the spring, and the harvests of autumn, the vicissitudes of the tide, and the revolutions of the sky, and praise the Maker for his works, in lines which no reader shall lay aside. The subject of the disputation is not piety, but the motives to piety; that of the description is not God, but the works of God.

" Contemplative piety, or the intercourse between God and the human soul, cannot be poetical. Man, admitted to implore the mercy of his Creator, and plead the merits of his Redeemer, is already in a higher state than poetry can confer.

" The essence of poetry is invention; such invention as, by producing something unexpected, surprises and delights. The topics of devotion are few, and being few are universally known; but, few as they are, they can be made no more; they can receive no grace from novelty of sentiment, and very little from novelty of expression.

" Poetry pleases by exhibiting an idea more grate-

ful to the mind than things themselves afford. This effect proceeds from the display of those parts of nature which attract, and the concealment of those which repel the imagination. But Religion must be shown as it is: suppression and addition equally corrupt it; and such as it is, it is known already.

"From poetry the reader justly expects, and from good poetry always obtains, the enlargement of his comprehension and elevation of his fancy; but this is rarely to be hoped by Christians from metrical devotion. Whatever is great, desirable, or tremendous, is comprised in the name of the Supreme Being. Omnipotence cannot be exalted; Infinity cannot be amplified; Perfection cannot be improved.

"The employments of pious meditation are Faith, Thanksgiving, Repentance, and Supplication. Faith invariably uniform, cannot be invested by fancy with decorations. Thanksgiving, the most joyful of all holy effusions, yet addressed to a Being without passions, is confined to a few modes, and is to be felt, rather than expressed. Repentance, trembling in the presence of the Judge, is not at leisure for cadences and epithets. Supplication of man to man may diffuse itself through many topics of persuasion; but supplication to God can only cry for mercy.

"Of sentiments purely religious it will be found that the most simple expression is the most sublime. Poetry loses its lustre and its power, because it is applied to the decoration of something more excellent than itself. All that pious verse can do is to help the memory and delight the ear, and for *these purposes* it may be very useful; but it sup-

plies nothing to the mind. The ideas of Christian Theology are too simple for eloquence, too sacred for fiction, and too majestic for ornament; to recommend them by tropes and figures, is to magnify by a concave mirror the sidereal hemisphere."—See Life of Waller.

These remarks seem to be founded on very erroneous principles; but having already offered our sentiments, we forbear any further comment, except to state that we profess to belong to the school of Cowper; that we participate in the expression of his regret,

> "Pity that Religion has so seldom found
> A skilful guide into poetic ground:"

and that we cordially share in his conviction,

> "The flowers would spring where'er she deign'd to stray,
> And every Muse attend her on her way."
>
> *Table Talk.*

SIMON BROWNE.

We have already alluded to the remarkable case of Simon Browne,* a learned dissenting minister, born at Shepton Mallet, in Somersetshire, about the year 1680. The extraordinary mental illusion, under which he laboured, led him to believe that Almighty God had annihilated in him the thinking substance, and utterly divested him of all consciousness. Consistently with this conviction he looked upon himself as no longer a moral agent, a subject of reward or punishment. Notwithstanding this strange frenzy, his faculties appeared to be, in every other respect, in their full vigour. My esteemed friend Mr. Cunningham having also referred to him in his interesting Essay on the Genius and Poetry of Cowper, we here subjoin the Dedication addressed by Browne to Queen Caroline, the Consort of George II. He designed to have prefixed this Dedication to his "Defence of the Religion of Nature, and the Christian Revelation, against the defective account of the one, and the exceptions against the other, in a book entitled,

* See Notes to vol. ii.

'Christianity as Old as the Creation.'"* His friends prudently suppressed this address. It was however subsequently published by Dr. Hawkesworth in the 88th Number of the "Adventurer," and we now insert it, as exhibiting the singular character of his delusion, and as bearing some analogy to the case of Cowper:

DEDICATION TO QUEEN CAROLINE.

MADAM,

Of all the extraordinary things that have been tendered to your royal hands, since your first happy arrival in Britain, it may be boldly said what now bespeaks your majesty's acceptance is the chief. Not in itself indeed; it is a trifle unworthy your exalted rank, and what will hardly prove an entertaining amusement to one of your majesty's deep penetration, exact judgment, and fine taste; but on account of the author, who is the first being of the kind, and yet without a name.

He was once a man, and of some little name; but of no worth, as his present unparalleled case makes but too manifest; for by the immediate hand of an avenging God, his very thinking substance has for more than seven years been continually wasting away, till it is wholly perished out of him, if it be not utterly come to nothing. None, no, not the least remembrance of its very ruins remains; not the shadow of an idea is left; nor any sense, so much as one single one, perfect or imperfect, whole or diminished, ever did appear to a mind within him, or was perceived by it.

* The well known work of Toland.

Such a present from such a thing, however worthless in itself, may not be wholly unacceptable to your majesty, the author being such as history cannot parallel; and if the fact, which is real, and no fiction or wrong conceit, obtains credit, it must be recorded as the most memorable, and indeed astonishing event in the reign of George II., that a tract, composed by such a thing, was presented to the illustrious Caroline; his royal Consort needs not be added; fame, if I am not misinformed, will tell that with pleasure to all succeeding times.

He has been informed that your majesty's piety is as genuine and eminent, as your excellent qualities are great and conspicuous. This can indeed be truly known to the great Searcher of hearts only. He alone, who can look into them, can discern if they are sincere, and the main intention corresponds with the appearance; and your majesty cannot take it amiss if such an author hints that his secret approbation is of infinitely greater value than the commendation of men, who may be easily mistaken, and are too apt to flatter their superiors. But, if he has been told the truth, such a case as his will certainly strike your majesty with astonishment, and may raise that commiseration in your royal breast, which he has in vain endeavoured to excite in those of his friends; who, by the most unreasonable and ill-founded conceit in the world, have imagined that a thinking being could for seven years together live a stranger to its own powers, exercises, operations and state, and to what the great God has been doing in it, and to it.

If your majesty, in your most retired address to

the King of kings, should think of so singular a case, you may perhaps make it your devout request, that the reign of your beloved sovereign and consort may be renowned to all posterity by the recovery of a soul now in the utmost ruin, the restoration of one utterly lost, at present, amongst men. And should this case affect your royal breast, you will recommend it to the piety and prayers of all the truly devout, who have the honour to be known to your majesty: many such doubtless there are, though courts are not usually the places where the devout resort, or where devotion reigns. And it is not improbable that multitudes of the pious throughout the land may take a case to heart, that under your majesty's patronage comes thus recommended

Could such a favour as this restoration be obtained from heaven by the prayers of your majesty, with what transport of gratitude would the recovered being throw himself at your majesty's feet, and, adoring the divine power and grace, profess himself,

Madam,
Your Majesty's most obliged
and dutiful Servant,
SIMON BROWNE.

END OF VOL. V.

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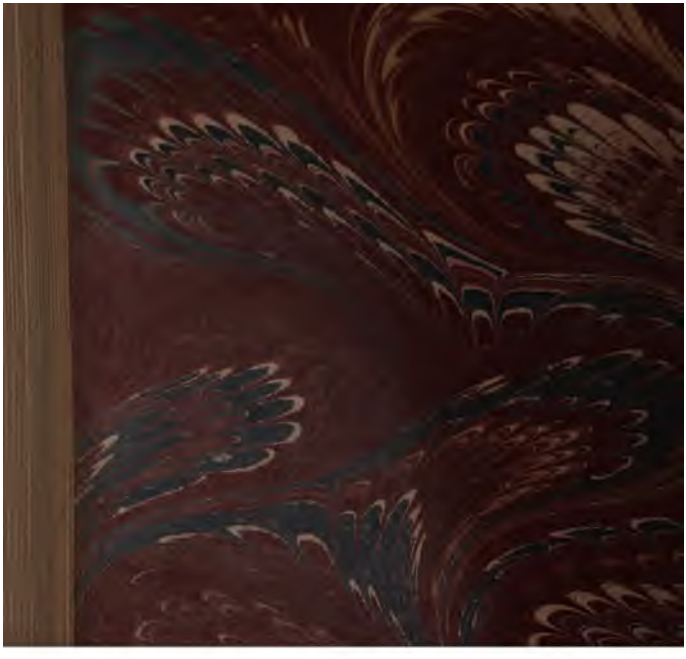

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